

**Town Center Committee  
Minutes for the Meeting of October 20, 2023**

This meeting was held at 12:00 pm in the Matthew Thornton Meeting Room in the Merrimack Town Hall:

**Present:** Nelson Disco (chairman), Dawn Tuomala, Finlay Rothhaus, Matthew Shevenell, Nicholas Lavalee, Karen Contos, and Karen Freed

**Absent:** Bill Wilkes

**Minute Taker:** Karen Contos

**Approval of September 29, 2023, Minutes**

**MOTION:** Dawn made a motion to approve the minutes and Finlay seconded it. Approve as presented.

**Vote:** 5-0-2, Matt and Dawn abstained.

**Special Guests:** John Lastowka and members of the Merrimack Historical Society

**OLD BUSINESS**

**Planning for Nov. 3 Groundbreaking for Souhegan River Trail and Status of Souhegan River Trail**

Nelson noted the date and time, Nov. 3<sup>rd</sup> at 10 a.m. and it would occur at Watson Park. He has invited the Merrimack Historical Society, Deborah Hoffman, Peter Flood, the Souhegan Local Advisory Committee, Lelia Mellon from the National Park Association, who donated \$1000 early in the project.

Dawn noted that she would invite the Town Manager and Town Council. In addition, representatives of the contractor (Piper), Anthony Putin from the Department of Transportation, and the engineering firms Quantum (design) and Beta (construction) will attend.

Nick will advertise the groundbreaking on the committee's Facebook page and on Merrimack TV.

Nelson will speak at the groundbreaking, discussing the lengthy process of getting this trail built and the welcome donations of land by Pennichuck and Patterson families.

Nick offered to be the host and will introduce Nelson. And Nelson would like Finlay to speak as well as he is the committee's Town Council member. Nick will

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investigate borrowing the portable PA system from Parks and Rec. There is a lot of history in this area and Nelson will mention this at the groundbreaking.

### **Review of Town Center Priority List and Cost Estimates**

Nelson mentioned a list of projects compiled by Dawn Tuomala and the committee had previously prioritized the remaining four projects. Nelson will review this with the Town Center on October 26<sup>th</sup>.

Regarding #2 on the project list, Matt reported that the O’Gara Drive sidewalk project is still being discussed by the administration. This original plan to build a sidewalk might be derailed by the building of a new Central Office. Also, the demolition of the Brentwood building freed up space for the administration building. Also, Matt recently drove down O’Gara during a girls soccer game being played and noticed that many cars were parked sideways along the street. Perhaps more parking spaces will be needed. He also updated the committee on how the Central Office project is becoming a more current priority due to paying off the Middle School and having more funding available.

Dawn commented on #10 on the Priority List which is the Pedestrian Bridge replacement off West Chamberlain, that this replacement may happen earlier than 2032. She will be contacting the Department of Transportation as vandalism and hazardous activity has been occurring on the closed off bridge. People have been breaking down the barricades and crossing the bridge which is structurally damaged.

**MOTION:** For the remaining four projects that have been prioritized but not yet funded, Karen C. made a motion to endorse the Priority List dated Sept. 23, 2023. Finlay seconded it. Approved as presented.

**Vote: 7-0-0.**

### **School Master Plan Status**

Matt reported that the plans for the School District’s new Central office building have been sent to contractors for bids and they already have three bids. The location will be where the Brentwood building was razed, and it is one square acre in size. The administrative building will be able to handle disabled staff and visitors. The community will be able to use the building. Everyone in the administration will be centrally located, and it will provide an excellent space for training.

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Nick asked if the meeting room would be able to have equipment installed to record the school board, budget and other potential meetings. Matt and Nick will get together to discuss that.

Nelson asked Matt if the school district was getting more students. Matt answered that indeed, elementary schools have seen larger kindergarten enrollments this school year.

### **Status of TCC Facebook and Town Center Videotaping**

Nick reported that the media team will be recording the Souhegan Trail Groundbreaking Ceremony from start to finish. The media team will release a short video under the title “It’s Happening in Merrimack”. There are now 641 followers on TCC’s Facebook page.

### **Status of Route 3/Wire Road & Baboosic Brook Bridge**

Dawn reported that the Wire Road Intersection has met one state warrant which would allow the town to move forward with the signal light. Dawn will present to the Town Council at some point as she wants them to make the final decision regarding this intersection.

## **NEW BUSINESS –**

### **Subjects for TCC Annual Report to the Town Council**

This annual report will be presented by Nelson on October 26<sup>th</sup>. He passed out topics for the annual report and asked if there were any comments. Several members pointed out small typos. Dawn will print out more of the large town center maps that have all the projects numbered.

### **Public Comments-**

John Lastowka from Merrimack’s History Society spoke. His group is producing a full length documentary about the Chamberlain bridge and would like to be kept in the loop when construction is being done. Nelson reported that Dawn would know the schedule best yet she had left the meeting already. He will get a schedule from her. John mentioned that a sixth-generation **James** Chamberlain family member came to see the bridge. In addition to her relative building the bridge, in 1825, Samuel and James Chamberlain created the Merrimack Fire Department by building the first fire station in town.

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Nick also mentioned that today was Community Media Day and five of the Merrimack TV's programs are finalists for an award at Alliance for Community Media.

Karen F. thanked the Merrimack Historical Society for what they are doing, as a legacy to future citizens of Merrimack.

**Adjournment –MOTION:** Karen F. made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Finlay seconded the motion. **Vote: 6-0-0**

**Next Meeting-** Next regular TCC Meeting is **TO BE DETERMINED.**