

**MANSFIELD DOWNTOWN PARTNERSHIP
PLANNING AND DESIGN COMMITTEE
Mansfield Downtown Partnership Office
1244 Storrs Road**

Tuesday, February 16, 2010

MINUTES

Members: Steve Bacon, Jon Hand, Chris Kueffner, Frank McNabb, and Peter Millman

Staff: Kathleen Paterson and Cynthia van Zelm (by phone)

1. Call to Order

Steve Bacon called the meeting to order at 5:11 pm.

2. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

3. Approval of Minutes from January 19, 2010

There was no quorum so the minutes were not passed.

4. Discussion of Public Spaces in Storrs Center – Mansfield Advocates for Children

Mr. Bacon introduced Terry Berthelot and Gloria Bent with the Mansfield Advocates for Children. Mr. Bacon gave a brief overview of the public spaces within Storrs Center including the two squares and smaller potential pocket parks. Mr. Bacon said he understood that there is interest from the Mansfield Advocates for Children for public spaces and a possible playscape. He noted that there is no developer budget for a playscape at this time.

Ms. Berthelot explained the goals of the Mansfield Advocates for Children including the focus on “community connectedness” where the objective is to create/promote family friendly places that will benefit the community. Sandy Baxter, Mansfield School Readiness Coordinator, and the Mansfield Advocates for Children are focusing on the 0-8 age group. The need to connect is important for this age group, in particular the subset that is not in school yet. Creating great public gathering places will help local businesses as a retail store such as an ice cream shop can be a real draw for families. Ms. Berthelot referenced Jamestown, RI and Oxford, MS as examples of true downtowns that are “organic gathering” places.

Ms. Berthelot encouraged the Committee to think about these needs as it continues to plan the downtown. A playground would be part of a plan to promote community gathering places and events.

Ms. Bent said the Mansfield Advocates for Children do not have data per se but anecdotal evidence through their surveys indicate that there can be a sense of isolation for some young families in the community. This is a particular issue for the international community. She said there is a lack of streets with sidewalks and places people can go to meet people, outside of the Mansfield Public Library. Ms. Bent said she sees Storrs Center as one avenue to fill that gap and build social capital.

Chris Kueffner asked what type of playground was envisioned. Ms. Berthelot said the main concern would be safety. One question would be whether it should be fenced in. She noted that Lisa Holle who works with the Mansfield Advocates for Children raised money for a playground for the Storrs Heights neighborhood. She said the goal would not necessarily be for a big structure; the space should include places where parents can sit and talk while kids play.

Jon Hand noted the importance of having a public restroom with a family bathroom nearby. Is this part of the Storrs Center plan? Mr. Bacon said this has been discussed but nothing has been laid out yet.

Ms. Bent noted that the feeling of isolation is not just from families. A community gathering place is important for all members of the community.

Frank McNabb said he is supportive but cautioned about the effect of the college student constituency on a playground area. It may be a difficult mix. He also said liability issues would need to be addressed. Cynthia van Zelm noted that the area that may be a good spot for a playscape would not border Storrs Road, but would be further back in the project adjacent to Village Street and the residential neighborhood. Ms. Berthelot thought that any potential vandalism could be kept at bay if the space is very active, and not isolated. There was some discussion on location and design of a potential playscape area.

Peter Millman suggested that the Mansfield Advocates for Children come back to the Planning and Design Committee with suggestions on 1) amenities they would like to see in Storrs Center i.e., playscape, bathrooms, benches, etc.; and 2) event and programming ideas. Ms. Berthelot agreed to come back to the Committee with some ideas. The Committee and Ms. Berthelot and Ms. Bent agreed that there can be a good partnership between the Mansfield Downtown Partnership and the Mansfield Advocates for Children to support a vibrant downtown and social center in Mansfield.

Ms. Berthelot invited Committee members to their meetings which occur on the first Wednesday of the month at 6 pm in the Mansfield Town Hall.

Ms. Berthelot said the Mansfield Advocates for Children would appreciate the Partnership signing a memorandum of understanding or letter supporting their goals as part of a grant application to the Graustein Memorial Fund. The grant will continue to support staffing and data collection for the Mansfield Advocates for Children. The Committee recommended that a letter of support be drafted by Ms. van Zelm and reviewed by the Committee and the Partnership Board (*done*).

5. Update on Storrs Road on Parking Steering Committee and Intermodal Facility

Ms. van Zelm reported that Town Public Works Director Lon Hultgren is working on comments to BL Companies' draft design document for Storrs Road. Once the Town has signed off, the 30 percent design is sent to the CT Department of Transportation.

Ms. van Zelm said the Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for design of the intermodal facility is being reviewed by the CT Department of Economic and Community Development and the Federal Transit Administration as they are both providing funding for the design. These federal and state agencies have different requirements regarding the RFQ bid process so staff is working to resolve these issues.

6. Topics for next meeting

Mr. Bacon said he did not think that BL Companies needed to come back to a meeting in April unless there were substantial changes to what they presented on Storrs Road in January.

Mr. Kueffner suggested that a record of changes that have occurred on Storrs Road be memorialized in a video simulation or in a bullet memo form. Ms. van Zelm said that some of those changes are noted in the Frequently Asked Questions. She will also talk to Project Manager Macon Toledano about how this might be addressed.

7. Adjourn

Mr. Kueffner made a motion to adjourn. Mr. McNabb seconded the motion. The Committee adjourned at 6:15 pm. The next meeting will be April 20 at 5 pm.