

**MANSFIELD DOWNTOWN PARTNERSHIP
PLANNING AND DESIGN COMMITTEE
Mansfield Downtown Partnership Office
Town Hall – Town Council Chambers**

Tuesday, June 21, 2011

MINUTES

Members: Steve Bacon, Laurie Best, Karla Fox, Manny Haidous, Frank McNabb, Peter Millman, Ruth Moynihan, Karin Randolph

Staff: Cynthia van Zelm and Kathleen Paterson

Guests: Board member Toni Moran, Mansfield Director of Human Services Kevin Grunwald

Storrs Center Team: Tim Andre and Norm Goldman (Desman Associates), Sam Gardner (Gregg Wies & Gardner Architects) (GWG), Macon Toledano (LeylandAlliance), Geoff Fitzgerald and John Schmitz (BL Companies), Lon Hultgren (Town of Mansfield)

1. Call to Order

Steve Bacon called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm.

2. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

3. Approval of Minutes from April 19, 2011

Peter Millman made a motion to approve the minutes of April 19, 2011 of the Special Meeting of the Planning and Design Committee. Frank McNabb seconded the motion. Laurie Best abstained. The motion was approved.

4. Approval of Materials/Colors for Intermodal Center and Parking Garage

Mr. Bacon introduced Mr. Fitzgerald, Mr. Toledano, Mr. Gardner, Mr. Andre, Mr. Goldman and Mr. Hultgren.

Mr. Bacon recapped the action of the Committee. He noted that on April 19 the Committee approved a recommendation to the Board of Directors on the zoning permit for the parking garage and the intermodal center. The Committee reserved an opinion on colors and materials. Mr. Bacon referenced a memo from former Director of Planning Gregory Padick to Zoning Agent Curt Hirsch that the zoning permit will not be issued until a recommendation is received from the Chair of the Planning and Design Committee on colors and materials.

Mr. Andre reviewed colors and materials for the parking garage. He noted that the garage rendering has been updated to match the intermodal center.

He noted that bronzed glass will be used and the mullions on the elevator will be white while the other mullions will be red to match the intermodal center. The mesh will tie into the red for the intermodal center.

Mr. Andre said the pre-cast colors for the garage will be a light sandblast finish for the entire garage.

Karin Randolph asked if the bronze tint was to cut the sun glare. Mr. Andre said the glass is not supposed to be mirror reflective. Mr. Bacon asked if the glass is responsive to potential solar panels on garage. Mr. Andre said it will help. Karla Fox asked if the garage will be solar ready. Mr. Andre confirmed that the garage is designed to take a solar array on the roof if funding becomes available.

Mr. Andre said some louvers are included to provide air through the lobbies to prevent heat.

Mr. Gardner said that the renderings for the intermodal center had also been updated. The parking garage and intermodal center are designed to be one building. The intermodal center is a two-story building that utilizes brick. The glass will be the same for the intermodal center as the parking garage. The colors will be the same as well.

The metals will be slightly darker for the spandrels than the cornice.

Ms. Fox asked about how the buildings will deal with significant snow. Mr. Gardner said the buildings will be fairly robust to stand the snow. Maintenance will be key.

Mr. Millman made a motion to recommend to the Director of Planning and Development that the materials and colors presented by Desman Associates and GWG, on behalf of the Town of Mansfield, at the June 21, 2011 Planning and Design Committee meeting be adopted as part of the design for the parking garage and the intermodal center. Ms. Randolph seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

5. Review of Zoning Permit Application for Post Office site and Post Office Road

Mr. Bacon summarized the last two zoning permit applications, noting that the Phase 1A and 1B application was from LeylandAlliance and EDR, and the parking garage and intermodal center application was a Town application.

Mr. Toledano said that the Post Office site and Post Office Road application is on behalf of LeylandAlliance and EDR. The application is for work to be done on PO Road that intersects with Village Street to the Town fields and the Post Office site. The section of PO Road to Storrs Road is part of the Storrs Road work.

Mr. Toledano said work needs to be done on the Post Office and Post Office Road so that the work on Village Street can proceed on land that the PO currently uses. The goal is to start construction in the fall. Mr. Toledano reiterated that Village Street will be a Town road.

Mr. Toledano said the Post Office has agreed in principle on the design work and the development team is working on a lease with the Post Office as it will take over this land from UConn.

Mr. Toledano said the plans for this site work have not changed since the master plan was approved as part of the Storrs Center Special Design District in 2007.

Mr. Toledano said the Storrs Center design guidelines do not apply to this area. They do apply to the section of Post Office Road from the intersection with Village Street to Storrs Road.

Mr. Fitzgerald said no new parking is planned; there will be improved vehicular movement in the back of the Post Office lot where the mail trucks are parked.

Part of the project includes significant storm water quality improvements. This area is one of the most impacted by wetlands. The goal is to capture and treat the storm water run-off. The work is consistent with the Army Corps of Engineers permit received in 2008. There will be a restoration plan for the wetlands. There will be a maintenance plan for the storm water system.

Mr. Fitzgerald said there will be a retaining wall along Village Street.

Mr. Fitzgerald said there will be a mail drop-off box on PO Road with a cul de sac at the end for easy turnaround by cars. Committee members expressed appreciation for the drop box.

Mr. Fitzgerald said the sidewalk will be extended toward the back of the Post Office. There will be more public parking in the back for customers as well as service vehicles as the Storrs Post Office has taken on an increased role.

Manny Haidous asked if the service vehicles will be fenced. Mr. Fitzgerald said there will be vertical fences for aesthetics as well as for safety. Mr. Haidous asked if there will be plantings along the fence. Mr. Fitzgerald said there will be street trees on the Village Street that should provide some screening.

Speaking as chair of the Parking Steering Committee, Ms. Fox asked if the Post Office parking would be part of a system-wide parking plan that the Committee is contemplating. Mr. Toledano said the Post Office has rights to its parking; they will need to monitor their lots for poaching. Ms. Fox thought the Post Office lots would be less of an issue than other lots that are closer to Storrs Center.

Mr. McNabb asked about the width of PO Road and the Village Street. Mr. Fitzgerald said that PO Road is 24 feet wide (this will not change with site improvements although it will be wider at the intersection with Storrs Road) and the Village Street will be 22 feet where there is no on-street parking.

Mr. Millman noted concerns about providing landscaping adjacent to the Greek amphitheater while the amphitheater is finished. Is there a danger of lack of landscaping if the Storrs Center project is delayed on this south end of the project? Mr. Toledano said the Print Shop and Design Center will not come down until closer to construction on the Market Square area so there will not be an empty space. Mr. Fitzgerald said there will be street trees and sidewalks on both sides of the Village Street.

Mr. Haidous asked if the intersection at PO Road and Storrs Road will change. Mr. Fitzgerald said the intersection will get a new light.

Mr. Bacon said the objective of LeylandAlliance and EDR is to file a zoning permit application as soon as possible. The development team wanted to make a presentation to the Planning and Design Committee to update the Committee and answer any questions.

Ms. Fox made a motion to endorse the concepts presented for the Post Office site improvements and Post Office Road. Mr. Haidous seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Ms. van Zelm will send the Legal Notice on the zoning permit public hearing to the residents of Courtyard Condos (*done*).

6. Update on Village Street Design

Derek Kohl from BL Companies gave a presentation to the Committee on the plans for the Village Street. He said that plans are at about 30 to 35 percent completion. The goal is to quickly get to the stage of construction documents. The plans are consistent with the design guidelines. The key is for the road to emphasize the pedestrian experience.

There will be on-street parking on both sides of Village Street. There will be angle parking in some areas. The team is looking at ways to provide a wider berth for backing up.

Buses will be coming in on Dog Lane if coming from the north to the intermodal center. The goal is to drop people off on the same side as the intermodal center. There will be bus pull-offs behind the parking garage and two adjacent to the intermodal center. The one in front of the intermodal center is likely for inter-city buses.

Nodes have been identified to provide public features such as public art, seating areas, kiosks, etc.

Mr. Kohl said one of the challenges is the significant grade changes – some as many as 15 feet. There will be a detention wall for draining. There will be a fence here. The goal is to look for a wood guardrail for car safety.

The only permit needed is from the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) for a storm water construction permit. It is required 30 days prior to construction. This is a new regulation from the DEP.

Mr. Haidous asked if there would be speed bumps. Mr. Kohl said there would be no speed bumps but there would be textured crosswalks. The team is looking at a mountable median at the south end of Village Street as a visual cue for cars to slow down.

Ruth Moynihan asked about the drainage behind the Greek Church. Mr. Fitzgerald said the bowtie wetland is in that area which will be filled but the area east of the wetland cannot be disturbed. Mr. Toledano noted that the project will clean-up that area significantly.

Ms. Moynihan noted that the turns for the buses appear to be fairly sharp. Mr. Fitzgerald said this was a good point and it is part of the give and take in creating a pedestrian oriented development. The movement is tight but it will work. Mr. Kohl added that they have a computer model that ensures that buses can make those turns.

Mr. Toledano said the team is still evaluating the best circulation routes.

Toni Moran expressed concern about the ability of trucks to service businesses. Mr. Fitzgerald said the team had run a model as described above to ensure that this could be done. Mr. Toledano said the service entry will need to be shown in a future zoning permit application.

Kevin Grunwald said that he works with the Mansfield Advocates for Children and they are interested in pocket parks and whether they will be family friendly. What is the process for decision making? Mr. Gardner said the time is right to look at nodes. Ms. van Zelm mentioned the public spaces stakeholder meeting that will be held tomorrow night where ideas will be exchanged as part of a public spaces plan.

Mr. Kohl said the preliminary design of the Village Street looks at the layout and transportation issues. The next level will look at nodes in more depth.

Mr. Toledano said the team has looked at a potential playground area in the residential section of Storrs Center. He noted that the street will be a public space/an outdoor room with trees, wide sidewalks, etc.

Mr. Bacon referenced Planning and Zoning Commission Chair Rudy Favretti's letter regarding the safety of pedestrians at the intersection near the intermodal center. Mr. Fitzgerald said there is a need to move vehicles through but at a safe speed and to be cognizant of pedestrians. Pedestrians should have the right of way. Mr. Fitzgerald said they did change the plans by pulling some parking spaces back from the intersection. Mr. Kohl noted that there will be signage to indicate that there is a speed limit of about 10 to 15 mph.

Mr. Kohl said the only stop sign will be northbound but there will be a yield to pedestrians at all the other intersections. A 3 way stop as contemplated will be difficult for bus parking. Mr. Toledano said the width of parking spaces has not changed. He also said that plans will come back to the Committee as they are revised.

Mr. Bacon asked if it had been determined what might need to be eliminated if the project comes in higher than the grant amount. Mr. Kohl said one way to save money is to narrow down the sidewalks. Mr. Hultgren said the plans and budget will need to be approved by the Federal Transit Administration. With respect to timing with the Committee, the suggestion was to have a meeting in July on the adherence of the Phase 1A and 1B plans with the Storrs Center Sustainability Guidelines and in August with more advanced plans for the Village Street.

7. Discussion of Storrs Center Streetscape Features

Mr. Fitzgerald provided the Committee with a number of examples of streetscape features including tree grates, benches, lights and bike racks.

He noted that the Century Battery Park lights are those used on the pedestrian walkway in front of the Town Hall. There is an LED alternative which has no glass and is lasts longer.

With respect to tree grates, the more modern design is easier for people in wheelchairs or high heels. There is also an aluminum tree grate.

Mr. Fitzgerald showed the bike racks that UConn uses based on their landscape amenities guidelines. The other example allows more bikes to fit.

He then showed some examples of bus shelters including UConn's which has glass panels. Another example is to have the shelter be open with no wall. It is very traditional and less prone to vandalism.

Mr. Fitzgerald said there will be bus stops in front of building TS-1 on Dog Lane; near Market Square on Storrs Road; and on the south end of the Village Street.

Mr. Fitzgerald passed around copies of the examples presented so Committee members could get a closer look.

Mr. Gardner said the goal is to ensure there are no conflicts with the current UConn bus shelter locations and design.

Mr. Toledano noted that there is a section in the Storrs Center design guidelines on lighting and streetscape features. The first elements that will need to be put in are the tree grates and lighting. What quality does the Committee prefer?

He noted that the LED lights are becoming the norm and save money. He thought these are worth considering. The light only shines down and it can be black, green or another color. Ms. Moran asked about the actual color of the light. Mr. Fitzgerald said the light is usually white.

Mr. Millman said his suggestion is to be consistent with UConn and Town streetscape elements but not necessarily copy them. He likes the LED light; the UConn bus shelter; and the more modern bench.

Mr. Gardner noted that it is important for the bus shelter to respect site lines.

Ms. Moynihan said she likes the LED light and the enclosed bus shelter. She does not like the aluminum trash can.

Kathleen Paterson asked about who will be responsible for maintaining the bus shelter and expressed her concern about vandalism. The open model looks easier to maintain. Mr. Fitzgerald said the bus shelter will be owned by the Town.

Ms. Fox said ergonomics and who is using the benches will be important. A person with a bad back may prefer the traditional bench. She prefers the tree grate that is better for a person with disabilities and high heels.

Mr. Toledano said price will need to be a consideration as well.

Mr. Fitzgerald suggested that the design team come back to the Committee with specific suggestions and corresponding boards based on the feedback it has received. Mr. Gardner suggested that there be samples of metal and paint.

Mr. Haidous asked if the goal is to repeat elements or to blend in with surrounding areas. Mr. Gardner thought with a village environment the goal would be to repeat quality.

Ms. Moran said her concern is that traditional elements may eventually look dated. What are the consequences for mixing traditional and new elements? Mr. Bacon said there has always been discussion about looking at neighborhoods in Storrs Center. Could different elements be located in different neighborhoods? Mr. Fitzgerald said that some consistency helps with maintenance. It also may be difficult to have an aluminum trash can next to a modern bench.

8. Topics for Next Meeting and Set Meeting Date

Mr. Bacon asked Committee members to reserve July 19 for a possible discussion of the sustainability guidelines.

9. Adjourn

Mr. Haidous made a motion to adjourn at 7:20 pm. Mr. Millman seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Minutes prepared by Cynthia van Zelm