Middlesex Walkable Village Scoping Study - Landowner Concerns Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, July 7th, 2021

6pm-7pm

Recorded Via Zoom
https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/160sCotw51hPqESX2_T7zCre04JzEaa66YcXDsngUvEPWP_0Q7zKobY-AoMII96r.IM8Udo5lhwCIqCr1

In attendance:
Sandra Levine - Planning Commission Chair
Elias Gardner - Planning Commission, Vice Chair
Theo Kennedy - Planning Commission
Roy Chimielewski - 12 Church Street
Holly Pembroke - 927 Route 2
David Pembroke - 927 Route 2
Russ Bennet - Planetary Matters
Mike Pelchar - Planetary Matters
Dayton Crites - Dubois & King

In attendance (remotely)
Mich Osiecki - Planning Commission
Phil Comen - Planning Commission
Peggy Leon - 2 Church Street
Dave Cannela - 16 & 14 Church Street
Randy George - Tenant, Camp Meade

Minutes:
Round of Introductions

Dayton Crites introduces the project in historical context of 2001-2021 planning studies and community projects

Meeting purpose is to speak to landowners and hear from them. No plans are to be made beforehand regarding trail development. Opportunities exist next week 7/14 to focus on sidewalk project area.

Question to the Room:

- Is building a trail between the Middlesex Village and Walter Kelley Park a good idea?

Question to landowners:

- Would you be open to additional discussion regarding a trail on your property? Why or why not?

Dave C. (Francis Foundation)

- Concerned about security and safety of building and residences run by the Francis Foundation.
- Does not want trail alongside this area, and not clear that it's needed.
- Not clear why two access points to Church street would be needed (sidewalk AND trail)

Randy George

- Local Red Hen Tenant
- Believes a trail expansion would be a great idea

Roy Chimielewski

- Don't want more people coming back to Church street to access (or come off of) a trail.
- Concerned about safety on his property
- Doesn't see the value of the trail between Red hen and Church Street
- Not for a trail there.

Holly & Dave Pembrook

- Are more concerned about sidewalk along route 2's south side.
- Is too close to their residence
- Concerned about people littering
- Agree that there should be space for a sidewalk, but not on their front lawn.
- Not for a trail access point on Church Street, concerned about parking impacts if trail access began on the street.
- Don't want to add more people to the neighborhood

Russ Bennett

- Believes many options are possible, and encourages everyone to listen to each other.
- Thinks that streetscape possibilities exist that could avoid people's front lawns, consider multiple street crossings
- Relays example of trail on his property that sees some abuse by local teenagers, but a quick call to parents cleans it right up, and most people are very respectful.
- Is motivated to develop trail on camp meade property to give people access to see the river and gorge behind Middlesex
- Recognizes that the land is sensitive, and believes trail that is a walking path would do the least harm

Peggy Leon

- Could work as a trail if it would bypass Church Street completely
- Doesn't want to see additional parking loads on Church Street impact her and her neighbors.

Mike Pelchar
- Trails connecting camp meade to walter kelley and roots market would be incredible.
- Its important to put yourself in other people's position.
- Would like to reconsider alignments for sidewalk on other side of the roadway
- We should consider more crosswalks

Theo Kennedy
- This group has congruence around safety and slowing down traffic
    - (Broad group agreement on this point)

Holly Pembrook
- Don't loose the charm of the village
    - Dayton Crites asks - where is the charm kept with the addition of sidewalk?
        - Holly responds "Danville" to a broad amount of agreement.

Dayton Crites
- Thanks members for their time, promises to follow up and provides contact of dcrites@dubois-king.com

Middlesex Walkable Village Scoping Study - Landowner Concerns Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, July 14th, 2021

6pm-7pm

Recorded Via Zoom
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1nuVIEZoDPwDupK3mujFAHlwQeBHF77p6/view?usp=sharing

In attendance:
Elias Gardner - Planning Commission, Vice Chair
Theo Kennedy - Planning Commission
Russ Bennet - Planetary Matters
Mike Pelchar - Planetary Matters
Dayton Crites - Dubois & King
Mich Osiecki - Planning Commission
Peggy Leon - 2 Church Street

In attendance (remotely)
Phil Comen - Planning Commission
Sandra Levine - Planning Commission Chair

Minutes:
Round of Introductions

Dayton Crites opens conversation to hear from affected landowners, recognizing that all present were in attendance last week. Asks Peggy Leon if she has any specific follow up questions or concerns.

Peggy Leon
- My side of lawn doesn't have much room to accommodate a sidewalk
- Concerned, but I do want to see a sidewalk project go forward. I walk to 100B, Roots Market, and Camp Meade regularly.
- Winter travel is very dangerous

Elias Gardner
- Suggest N alignment w/ crossing to church

- PL likes this concept

Mitch Oseki
- Note that all resources for Town are on south side of roadway. A sidewalk there would make sense, and not introduce dangerous road crossings

Mike Pelchar
- I prefer walking no north side, I felt safer.
- Train station sight lines are very limited
- A sidewalk to depot could support access and use

<general discussion of curve and safety perceptions>

Peggy Leon
- Parking access a real concern, especially during Camp Meade events

Russ Bennett
- 107 Spots are currently available prior to overflow parking.
- Consider project expanding parking on street to Center Road
- Sticks and Stuff is functional overflow parking
- Road Realignment should be considered as part of this study.
    - PG: That may impact property owners

Elias Gardner
- Consider far west connections to Center Street, Park and Ride, and other connections / employment centers further west.
- Consider trail connection to walking path

<discussion of village designation boundaries and pop up events / tests>

Russ Bennnet
- Paths are popular and successful (relates history of Waitsfield path-sidewalk)
- The ned for this facility is real.

<general discussion of church street residential life and history / longevity of various residents on street>

Walkable Middlesex Scoping Study

Community Forum (aka Local Concerns) Notes

Wendesday, September 1, 2021 at 6pm
Live at the Middlesex Town Office and on Zoom

In Attendance
Remote

- Jon Udis
- Philip Comen, Planning Commission
- Mike Pelchar
- David Lawrence
- Theo Kennedy, Planning Commission
- Jeff Harvey (Moretown)
- Emily Smith
- Mitch O, Planning commission
- Elias Gardner, Planning Commission
- Luc
- Susan Warren
- Russ Bennett

In Person

- Sandy Levine
- Nicholas Hecht (Pyralisk Art Center)
- Tom Morano, Sharon Merchant & Janet Merrill (all associated with the Middlesex Methodist Church)
- Peggy Leon
- The additional people I know who were on Zoom were:
- Luc Bernier
- Dave Shepard
- Michael Levine

Quorum of Planning Commission is present (this is a planning commission meeting)

Overview

- Sandy: This is a study to understand what is realistic, what is the cost for some improvements along Route 2, including sidewalk and potential streetscape improvements
- Dayton: Tonight, we will discuss why we are talking about a Walkable Middlesex Village; constraints to building improvements; what should improvements look like; get some feedback and input

Project History / Goals

- A Walkable Village has been discussed since 2001 through various planning projects;
- Goal: to make it safe to walk through Middlesex Village
    - Part 1: Can we build a sidewalk to make it safe to walk from point A to point B in the Village?
    - Part 2: Connecting a trail corridor between the Village and publicly owned river access (Walter Kelley Park)
- What is a Scoping Study?
    - An intermediate step to bridge the gap between planning and getting to design/construction
    - No Build is always considered
    - No foregone conclusion; alternatives are examined
    - Ultimately, this document can be leveraged for future funding opportunities
    - Russ questions
        - Asks what is the ROW? -- 49.5 feet / three rods
        - Notes, he's seen what's happened in Waitsfield where bikes are forced to be in the travel lane, but here is already traffic and parking slowing cars down
        - In Middlesex, we are interrupting a speeding zone. Bikes may not be safe. With limited ROW, how can we accommodate

Project Constraints

- Right of way is 3 rods / 49.5 feet; this is the public ROW before private property starts
- Historic Structures: there are archaeologically sensitive areas identified in the project area. Additional investigation will be required when building in the roadway.
- Sight Distances: we can't recommend a crosswalk just anywhere, there are spots with limited visibility / "sight distance" available.
    - In general, there is good visibility in the straight area in front of Red Hen
    - To the east, the road is curved and there are slopes on the side; there is not enough sight distance for a crosswalk
- Emily Smith: asks why Waitsfield and Moretown have 30mph vs 35 mph
- Roadway constraints: travel lanes, shoulders, etc needed for travelway

Trail Project

- Private properties are the main constraint; need to be considerate of people's properties
- However, there is a large, State-owned parcel along Route 2 that could potentially be a trail corridor
- This trail could be a small, natural surface path; paved; or gravel

Design Possibilities

- Streetscape improvements (in core are in front of Camp Meade) and sidewalks only areas

- What could be done? Outdoor dining, bicycling parking, etc (see posters); What types of improvements would you like to see?

Discussion

- Emily Smith asks re: Speed limits - how do Villages like Waitsfield and Moretown manage to have a 30mph zone vs 35mph
    - Focus of this study is to help create visual cues that change the speed of how fast people drive through an area; people don't necessarily drive the posted speed limit
    - VTrans sets speed limits based on the 85th percentile speeds of the road (determined by a speed study)
    - Russ notes that there are ways to manipulate the speed that people are driving, i.e. hire a sheriff to enforce speed limits. Also, things like parallel parking also slow people down
- Susan asks: Do we know if in general Vtrans would be supportive of a trail/path on their property (i.e. potentially linking the village with the park and ride and maybe Walt Kelley Park)?
    - Currently, we don't "know" (it is hard to get a yes or no answer from agencies before having a clear proposal)
- David Lawrence's comments re: speed limit changes (posted speed limit change versus changing the design of the road itself)
    - There's sound engineering reasons for why that is., and why designing the streetscape to change behavior intrinsically is superior to the wishful attempt at changing the posted speed limit.
- Mike Pelchar: asks if there are bump outs on the road, does that mean the State won't maintain or plow the road?
    - Fuzzy area; there are specific VTrans requirements (14' clear zone from centerline) that can usually be met
    - Russ notes that in Waitsfield, the State still owns and maintains the road but they still have sidewalks and curbing
- Resident at Town hall
    - Trucks go fast through the Village and hit big pot holes; sounds super loud and "like WWIII" (Note: State will decide when to repave the road)
    - Visual cues along the road can help reduce vehicle speeds
- Peggy Leon, lives on Church St across the street from Town Hall
    - Doesn't want to lose any frontage on their front yard; upset that there is a sidewalk proposed; why not put a crosswalk at my house?
    - Crosswalk sight distance is a key constraint; any sidewalk would be designed to be minimally invasive and in the public ROW
    - Note, road realignment is a possibility
- Russ notes, the perceived road is not taking up the entire ROW, the State owns some of the land adjacent

- Possible to change the road alignment to shift it to the North to limit encroachments to properties on south side of the road
- 10 Church St neighbor (Church burned down in Feb)
  - Here to listen and communicate, and is trying to figure out what to do with their property to add to the community / village / town
  - New church / community center is a possibility. Wants to connect people in the Village. No definite plans yet, but does plan to rebuild a new church with commercial kitchen; space for people to congregate

Next Steps

- D&K to follow up and make sure stakes along Route 2were not placed by D&K survey team
- Posters at the Town will be in Camp Meade
- Public survey is open through September
- D&K will develop alternative designs and they will be presented to the public

Walkable Middlesex Scoping

Public Design Concept Review - Meeting Recording Located Here.

2.23.2022

Attendees

- Sandy Levine - MSX Planning Commission (PC)
- Peggy
- Mitch Osiecki - MSX Planning Commission (PC)
- Theo Kennedy- MSX Planning Commission (PC)
- Elias Gardner- MSX Planning Commission (PC)
- Philip Comen -MSX Planning Commission (PC)
- Dayton Crites, D&K
- Julia Ursaki, D&K

Design Concept Review

- Concepts are not isolated: you can mix and match your favorite pieces from each. We can take these 3 concepts, and come out with a preferred alternative that suits Middlesex
- Concept 1: Village Placemaking
    - Most traffic calming features
    - Requires coordination / special situation and exception from VTrans standards or Class 1 takeover
    - Where possible, sidewalk is separated from the road by a grassy buffer
- Concept 2: Walking Village
    - Contiguous sidewalk connection; but no other traffic calming
    - Sidewalk is curbed next to the road
- Concept 3: Walking and Biking Village
    - Contiguous sidewalk
    - 5’ bike lanes throughout
    - Bike lane buffers with vertical elements (bollards) at village entrances (Camp Meade and 100b)
    - Requires coordination / special situation and exception from VTrans standards or Class 1 takeover
- No Build Option

Public Comment

- Peggy: “that’s my house you’re talking about!”
    - Really wants a sidewalk there, but this is only 14 feet from my house. Doesn’t want sidewalk only 3’ from lilac bushes. Strongly prefers the 7’ buffer.

- Sidewalk would benefit her, and her AirBnb
- Especially the bike lane option, feels the sidewalk is too close to her house
- Asks why the street can't be moved over further away from her house so that there is more space.
- Doesn't want the road edge any closer to her house, if you can take 7' from my side, why can't you just take the 7' from the other side instead?
- Peggy prefers Concept 2, because of buffer to her house and the lilac bushes

- Theo notes that these are "ingredients" - can we combine traffic calming from concept 1 with the sidewalk location in front of Church St/house constraint?
- Sandy - Is Peggy asking for entire ROW to be shifted away from her house?
- Theo - can we use Concept 2 as a "precursor" to Concept 1? Placemaking, traffic calming, and safety especially is of the utmost importance here

Next Steps

- Online survey is live until March 9
- PC should promote the survey and posters and Red Hen
- Final recommendation / preferred alternative will be presented to the Selectboard (3rd Wednesday of March)