



**TOWN OF WINCHESTER
PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
Town of Winchester Town Hall
338 Main Street - 2nd Floor – P. Francis Hicks Room
September 9, 2019 – 7:00PM
Regular Meeting Minutes**

1. CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman Craig Sanden called the meeting to order at 7:00PM.

2. ROLL CALL:

Mr. Sanden conducted the roll call, noting that the following individuals were present: Pete Marchand, Jerry Martinez, Alternates John Cooney and Willard Platt.

Absent excused was George Closson, Art Melycher, and Alternate Lee Thomsen.

Mr. Cooney and Mr. Platt were seated for Mr. Closson and Mr. Melycher.

3. AGENDA REVIEW:

The agenda was modified to include *Discussion on Post-Educational Use for Batcheller School Property* under Other Business.

4. PUBLIC HEARINGS:

None.

5. OLD BUSINESS:

None.

6. NEW BUSINESS:

A. PZC#19-12 – Special Permit – 354 Main Street – Applicant: Alan Nero Owner: Gilson Building Property, LLC Proposal: Utilize Main Theatre as well as Second Theatre for live entertainment to include acoustics, concerts, disc jockeys, live bands, comedians, karaoke, and/or magicians.

MOTION: Mr. Marchand, Mr. Martinez second, to accept Application PZC#19-12 and to schedule a public hearing for September 23, 2019; unanimously approved.

B. PZC#19-13 – CGS 8-24 Referral – Bridge Street/Willow Street/Depot Street/Prospect Street – Applicant/Owner: Town of Winchester – Realignment of Prospect Street, Bridge Street, Depot Street, Willow Street, and Mad River Lofts Driveway.

Department of Public Works Director Jim Rollins, Project Manager Bart Clark, and Traffic Engineer Charlie Baker, of the engineering firm VHB, appeared before the Commission regarding this application. Mr. Baker distributed copies of graphics that had been included in VHB's August 2019 report after having completed their traffic engineering study. Mr. Rollins reported that the study of this area was funded through a grant. He noted that other public works employees were consulted along with emergency service personnel.

Mr. Baker noted his firm had been working with the Town in evaluating existing conditions and potential improvements at the intersection. He explained that the goal of the improvements is to improve safety for pedestrians and motorists and to improve traffic conditions through the intersection. Additional goals included improving access to the mill building and increasing on-street parking in the area to spur economic development, according to Mr. Baker. He then reviewed their findings relative to existing conditions including

the prominent movement in that area being from Prospect Street to Willow Street and back. He noted that the intersection's functionality level of service was found to be a C or better. Mr. Baker noted the lack of crosswalks in this area. Other things that VHB considered is the future expansion of the trail in this area as well as the very wide driveway to the mill building with limited visibility. The steep grade of Bridge Street was noted by Mr. Baker. He noted that it is over 15% which is not often seen in areas other than San Francisco.

Mr. Baker then reviewed a short-term plan and a long-term plan. A realignment of the intersection was presented as part of the short-term plan including the addition of crosswalks and stop signs at all four approaches in this area. He noted that the short-term concept realigns the southern leg of Bridge Street to the eastern part of Depot Street. Two-way traffic would be limited only to the driveway at 29 Bridge Street with it being one way southbound after that.

The long-term concept plan was reviewed, too. Mr. Baker noted that the short-term improvements would be continued. He indicated that the existing Willow Street would be realigned south onto Depot Street, with the westerly portion of Willow Street converted to one-way easterly traffic and adding on-street parking. The drawbacks with the long-term concept plan is the construction costs and the necessary property acquisition. There was no indication when the long-term concept plan might be feasible.

The proposed one-way section of Bridge Street was reviewed and discussed.

As a public information meeting was held simultaneously with the Commission's review of the application, questions and comments were received.

Tom Porter of 42 Lewis Street questioned whether the Town would likely have problems with plowing as a result of the street becoming one-way. Mr. Rollins noted that the former ice problem in the area has likely been remedied through drainage improvements undertaken this past summer.

The two parcels on Willow Street were discussed as part of the review of the long-term plan.

Mr. Baker reported that a traffic signal had been considered but the traffic count did not warrant a signal. He noted that a roundabout was also considered but it would be much more costly and require quite a bit of grading. Mr. Porter noted that the main problem there is people not stopping at the stop sign. Mr. Baker noted that the realignment should help as the way it currently exists, Prospect Street is a side street. He noted that it actually has the heaviest traffic movement.

Mr. Rollins noted that he intends to have the final concept painted on the ground in order to provide a trial run and glean more information on whether the design will function as intended. He noted that it is a very inexpensive way to also receive more public feedback.

Charles Nash of 30 Bridge Street questioned whether the Town would have problems plowing Bridge Street with the addition of a stop sign at the end of it, at Maple Street. Mr. Rollins noted that he has shared that concern and indicated that a trial run may help in making the determination. Mr. Sanden questioned whether taking it down in the winter months might aid. Mr. Rollins indicated that he is reluctant to add another one of those situations. Mr. Baker indicated that there might be an opportunity to reduce the slope by one or two percent and will review this once they are at the full design stage of the project.

Mr. Nash also shared his concern whether there would be an increase in noise pollution in this area.

Mr. Platt questioned whether a traffic circle might work if Bridge Street was blocked off, noting that to continue onto Bridge Street requires almost an S-turn, and had concerns whether the loss of momentum could be problematic during the winter months. Mr. Clark noted that people may turn up Prospect Street and use

alternative ways. Mr. Baker reminded the Commission about the future trail development, coupled with added development on the mill building, it is likely that the demand for pedestrian crossing in that area is going to increase. He noted that the only safe way for that to happen is through the addition of stop signs.

Mr. Rollins commented on the number of pedestrians in that area, the lack of crosswalks, and the large width of the street.

The added green zones may be comprised of simple topsoil and seed or may be other plantings depending on the preference of the community, according to Mr. Baker.

MOTION: Mr. Marchand, Mr. Platt second, to forward a favorable recommendation to the Board of Selectmen finding that the Realignment of Prospect Street, Bridge Street, Depot Street, Willow Street, and Mad River Lofts Driveway pursuant to C.G.S. 8-24; unanimously approved.

7. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: August 26, 2019.

The August 26, 2019 Minutes ought to include the following modifications:
Mr. Martinez and Mr. Melycher ought to be indicated as absent excused.

MOTION: Mr. Marchand, Mr. Sanden second, to approve the August 26, 2019 Minutes as modified; Motion passed with Mr. Sanden, Mr. Marchand, and Mr. Cooney voting aye while Mr. Martinez and Mr. Platt abstained.

8. COMMUNICATIONS:

A communication from the Siting Council regarding the addition of an antennae to cell tower in town.

9. STAFF REPORT:

None.

10. OTHER BUSINESS:

A. Discussion with Harold Zinno of Mercury Fuels Regarding Minor Site Plan Changes at 29 Main Street.

Staff reported a receipt of a request from Harold Zinno of Mercury Fuels for a site plan modification of one of the new trees originally planned for the area between its parking lot and McDonald's to the other side of the parcel to the area between the parking lot and CVS or near the dumpsters. He noted that its current location could affect root growth near the fuel tanks. The consensus of the Commission was that the tree should be located near the dumpsters and that this change was minor in nature.

B. Discussion on Post-Educational Use for Batcheller School Property.

Mr. Martinez explained that now that the Hinsdale School renovations have been approved, he wants to be sure that a plan is prepared for the Batcheller School. He noted that this could be a very good site for post-educational use in the town. Mr. Martinez opined that this parcel would be an ideal location for a community center. Mr. Marchand noted that he had served on past building committees and recalled that there are significant structural modifications needed at Batcheller School and reported that the site also has an underground fuel tank.

C. Continued Discussion of Zoning Regulations.

Discussion was continued to a meeting with a fuller board.

D. Plan of Conservation and Development.

Mr. Sanden noted that Mr. Marchand has had to step down from serving on this committee as he had a conflict with another committee. He invited commissioners to attend the next POCD subcommittee meeting scheduled for September 16, 2019 at 6PM in the Probate Conference Room of Town Hall.

E. Review 2020 Regular Meeting Schedule.

MOTION: Mr. Marchand, Mr. Sanden second, to approve the 2020 Regular Meeting Schedule of the Planning and Zoning Commission as presented; unanimously approved.

11. ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION: Mr. Martinez, Mr. Marchand second, to adjourn at 8:08PM; unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Pamela A. Colombie
Recording Clerk