

MINUTES
WATERFORD TOWN CENTER DEVELOPMENT
AD-HOC COMMITTEE
September 22, 2021
Town Hall: 5:30 PM

RECEIVED FOR RECORD
WATERFORD, CT

2021 OCT -6 AM 8:48

David L. Campo
TOWN CLERK

Members Present: Miriam Furey-Wagner, Library Board of Trustees; Traci Santos, Recreation and Parks Commission; Melissa Chiappone, Recreation and Parks Commission
Members Absent: Jennifer Bracciale, Representative Town Meeting
Staff Present: Abby Piersall, Planning Director; David Campo, Town Clerk; Maureen FitzGerald, Environmental Planner
Others Present: Chad Frost, Architectural Consultant Kent+Frost; Jodi Nazarchyk, Selectman, Fran Violante, Resident

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting commenced at 5:30 pm.

2. APPROVAL OF SEPTEMBER 2, 2021 MEETING MINUTES

Motion: made by Jodi Nazarchyk, second by Traci Santos to approved the minutes of the September 2, 2021 meeting as written.

Vote: unanimous

3. REVIEW SEPTEMBER 9, 2021 PUBLIC MEETING AND COMMENTS

Chad Frost distributed a summary of the public feedback and comments on the conceptual plan for the committee to review. (see attached)

4. REVIEW CONCEPTUAL DESIGN ELEMENTS & DISCUSS PRIORITIES FOR FINAL DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

Preliminary changes incorporated into the concept plan based on feedback include clarification that the library entrance drive from Rte 156 will remain one-way, removal of a proposed access drive from Rte 156 to the Recreation & Parks maintenance building, and a slight modification to the loop trail around the pond to make it ¼ of a mile in length. An 8-10 ft wide concrete surface is proposed for the loop pathway. Cost estimates are being compiled.

C. Frost reviewed potential phases for project implementation. Phase 1 will include dredging the pond to remove accumulated sediment and debris and improvements to the upper forebay area. An estimated 4 – 5 thousand yards of material could be removed and temporarily stored near the southeast corner of the pond to de-water the material. Phase 2 includes improvements around the pond, the boardwalk and walkway, lighting and planting beds. Phase 3 will involve streetscape and sidewalk improvements along Rte 156, Phase 4 will include the playground improvements and connecting walkways and Phase 5 the upgrades to the library parking and hillside terrace area. Some overlap of the separate phases will likely occur for construction purposes.

The committee reviewed material types for the pedestrian bridges and the boardwalk. C. Frost recommended using granite in some of the design elements based on the Town's history and Millstone quarry. Styles and types of lighting fixtures were discussed with options to match existing fixtures at the memorial fountain or to use another style throughout the civic triangle. C. Frost will forward information of various samples of lighting for pedestrian streetlights and bollard lights for walkways.

5. PROJECT TIMELINE AND APPROVALS

The committee reviewed future steps and target dates towards preparing a final master concept plan, presenting the plan for approval to the Board of Selectmen sometime in November and applying for grants. The master plan would need to be accepted before submitting grant proposals.

6. DISCUSS OCTOBER 14TH PUBLIC PRESENTATION

The next public presentation of the plan is scheduled for October 14, 2021 at 5:30 pm. A power point version of the presentation will be made available on the Town web page. A scheduled September 28th presentation to the Planning & Zoning Commission via Zoom will also be recorded and available digitally.

7. DISCUSS COMMITTEE MEETING SCHEDULE

October 14, 2021 – Public Presentation

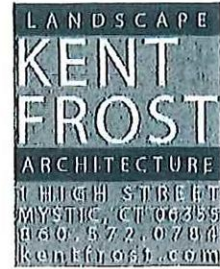
8. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 6:30 PM.

Reported by:


Maureen FitzGerald

WATERFORD CIVIC TRIANGLE PARK CONCEPTUAL PLAN PUBLIC FEEDBACK



PUBLIC COMMENT #1

I like the looks of the plan!

I have two comments:

1. I love the idea of a sledding hill, but please keep safety in mind.
2. Please consider native trees for any new ornamental plantings. They're more beneficial for birds and other wildlife, and there are tons of beautiful options!

PUBLIC COMMENT #2

I have some general comments about the project overall, and some very specific comments about the proposed changes to Library parking.

Generally, I feel the whole project is a positive step toward improving the Civic Triangle, and making it a vibrant community destination.

1) I think the changes around the pond (walkways, boardwalk, overlook) are terrific. I love the inclusion of benches and public art, and the wetlands education component.

2) I agree with someone who commented (from Chris's notes) about the need for geese control. The hill can get pretty grubby, and if there is to be a plaza there, it would be sad if it were frequently unusable because of the goose poop.

3) This is probably beyond the scope of this project, but having a decent sidewalk around the perimeter of the triangle would be an incentive for pedestrian access. I have tried walking this for exercise, but portions of the Boston Post Road section lack even a rudimentary sidewalk on the Triangle side. I'm pretty sure that access to the Civic Triangle area is primarily via driving, but convenient and safe pedestrian access should be considered as a progressive and eco-friendly component of a town center.

Specifically about the parking, my main comment is that I feel it would be a very ill-advised move to take away the separate entrance/exit drives at the Library. I have worked for the Library for over 20 years, entering from both directions and exiting both directions on Rope Ferry at various times of the day/evening, so I feel reasonably qualified to give a frequent user's view of the traffic flow.

In my opinion, having a two-way flow at the current entrance would increase the likelihood of vehicular or pedestrian accidents at the site. Exiting in particular would be a challenge:

1) visual to the right would be more difficult than it is currently, because of the subtle rise in the road + more obscured visuals of both the condo entrance and the traffic flow at the Avery/Great Neck traffic signal

2) visual to the left would be difficult because of the entering traffic + closer to the community center entrance + closer proximity to the town hall traffic signal

3) the planned parking on both sides of the entrance lane (nearer to the road + 90-degree parking, which makes for slower pulling in/out than the current angled spaces) would be an additional hazard for both entering and exiting traffic flow.

4) Plus, with only one entrance, when there is an accident, there would be no way to get in or out until it's cleared - that seems like the reverse of forward planning.

My suggestions:

- 1) keep the current one-way entrance/exit configuration

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- 2) consider widening the lane in the front of the library, modifying the current 90-degree parking (6 spots) to angled, and adding angled parking along the entire one-way front lane of the building.
- 3) Incorporate EV charging stations into the parking area, and at Town Hall as well. This seems like a perfect complement to the use of the park/pond/library/town hall area - people could charge their vehicles while using the recreational or town office facilities.

PUBLIC COMMENT #3

The Waterford Civic Triangle is a pleasant and safe area, close to conveniences and shopping centers. This area needs to be more pedestrian friendly, with a focus on sidewalks, and safe street crossing areas. The SEAT bus #3, passes through this area; daily, during the regular work week; about every 2 hours, en route to Niantic, Waterford, and New London. The Civic Triangle should be interconnected to the busy shopping centers in Waterford, which are very close by; if you have a vehicle. As a pedestrian who depends on public transportation; it can be difficult for the senior population and others who rely on public transportation.

PUBLIC COMMENT #4

Concept 'as-is' lacks sufficient specificity for comment. Additional information owed to taxpayers include(s):

1. Purpose
2. Element/Cost breakdown
3. Return on Investment (ROI) - projected and how it will be achieved
4. Budget Priority -- specifically, what is being given up to fund this -- if anything?

Perhaps this information was available at the 9/9 meeting, but this taxpayer unaware of it. Would be useful to post answers/additional information on the website

PUBLIC COMMENT #5

This is so minimal. It appears just to be an update renovation on what's already there. What happened to the concept and plans years ago to develop a civic triangle area with retail (how about a coffee shop?) I would love to see an area to bring the community together as a "town center" - a town center with retail, a restaurant, etc. (independent businesses, not chains). We certainly do not need another dollar store; route one looks a bit dismal in Waterford. "Walkability" to this area is nice, but one needs things to walk to.

PUBLIC COMMENT #6

Most towns and companies have long term plans. Waterford does not appear to have a long term infrastructure plan. Although this project is nice is it really needed? It's a very nice area of town but there are a lot more urgent projects that would benefit the town. Our sidewalks and roads are falling apart why not start there. You look at neighboring towns like Groton and New London and it's obvious there commitment to their infrastructure. They are fixing roads and sidewalks. Fix our infrastructure first

PUBLIC COMMENT #7

Honestly, I was expecting more of a redo. Besides a walking path and access, there really isn't a big change. A few suggestions from my point of view.

If buying the two properties (Dr. Office & Old Plant Store) isn't a possibility, then utilize more of the wooded area to expand the eastern side of the pond more. Fill in more of the area so we can have festival tents around the pond giving things like the Farmers Market a place to set up tents to allow people to stroll around the pond while shopping. This would allow other events to go on that are similar. Make the outside classroom big enough to have small entertaining events like Essex does. The Waterford beach concert series is great, but smaller entertainers would be awesome there. Filamenas recent adaptation to entertaining has shown that this area is ripe for musical entertaining and why not host that type of movement in Waterford. Make the parking easy and it could be a great venue for those smaller entertainers. Everything from kids magician, public nature education, as well as smaller music events (My Minnesota polka heritage comes to mind).

It's a great start, but filling in around the pond to make it more usable with higher edges will give us a much more community gathering space. We won't get a chance to do this again and I would encourage the committee to go bigger to transform the area to have real events there. Thanks for all the work you are doing, I for one appreciate the extra commitment you are giving the town and its residents.

PUBLIC COMMENT #8

Aside from some landscaping, I don't see a real difference between what we have now and what is planned. I would suggest a walking path, and perhaps a bike path where you don't have to worry about traffic. Thank you

PUBLIC COMMENT #9

Meetings should have option to view using zoom or other virtual technology because of Delta surge. I doubt that the auditorium has enough ventilation to mitigate the potential virus transmission. Too many residents have or care for young children who are not eligible for vaccination for them to feel safe attending, myself included. I would like to hear the presentations, but do not attend indoor events. The published minutes do not give much detail.

PUBLIC COMMENT #10

Hi - I like the proposed plans! I have a toddler and we frequent the existing playground. Sometimes we like to take a break from the playground and go find "critters" at the pond, so having that more accessible is a great idea. And I love the idea of a path/boardwalk around the pond. Honestly I didn't know there were trails from the library to the pond, and the skate park to the pond. Will they be lit? Will they be paved/crushed stone/wood chips, or kept natural? Although one thing I would like to see more of are trash/recycle bins. I like the overall plan and that it accommodates all age groups. Great job!

PUBLIC COMMENT #11

2 Way traffic at the Library entrance is a significant concern. Consider one-way with angled parking and maintain the site circulation.

Please consider permeable pavement for any new surfaces.

Will the existing bathrooms accommodate larger events/increased use?

The Town should purchase the green survival site.

The Town should address the maintenance facility and whether this is the right place for it.

Please, please, please, consider landscaping for the Library that celebrates its architecture.

PUBLIC COMMENT #12

Hello, As a former PE teacher in town, like to promote the outdoors and healthy choices for our residence and visitors. I would like to propose to have one of many bike kiosks at the Town Center for bike rentals. Thinking that the Town Center would be one many location that a kiosk of bike rental would be available for touring the area. Some idea on location would be the following: WTFD Town Center, Harkness Memorial Park, Mago Point, Stenger Park (Clark Lane parking lot), Waterford Beach, Seaside, Pleasure Beach, even---Ocean Beach (New London), etc..... Folks of all sorts; town people, visitors, vacationer, day trips, etc... could hop on a bike and enjoy the coastal areas of Waterford, then stopping back at Town Center for that ice cream treat or cup of java. Check out this link that I have enclosed. There are several other companies online that provide the same type of rental program. <https://bikeshare.bird.co/>

PUBLIC COMMENT #13

Thank you from the Library. We are all very excited about the planned improvements both to the pond and our property as well. Overall, I think the vision and plan are wonderful. A few specific items I wanted to comment on: the outdoor stage at the library - just wanted to clarify that all Town Depts. can use this space, for us, the platform need only support the performers - so perhaps something much smaller? The public enjoyed setting up their own chairs and blankets on the grass. Also, we are unclear about the plantings adjacent to the stage. As mentioned in the meeting, for parking, we would prefer to continue the current in/out traffic flow, but with better signage and pavement markings. Also, we would appreciate spaces large enough to accommodate SUVs, families and our elderly patrons who have difficulty navigating the lot/parking. For the permanent Storywalk Installation along the new boardwalk, we were planning to reach out to the Kelsey S. Harrington Foundation for funding, unless they are already funding other parts of the plan? We are also really pleased about getting an outdoor sign!

PUBLIC COMMENT #14

I have a concern about the trees on the plaza side of the library. I feel that they may cut off the view/access to the pond and isolate the library from the pond area.

Also, having parking spots on both sides of the library entrance may be a safety hazard. As it is, cars often back out into incoming traffic entering the library from Rt. 156, and having cars backing out of both sides may be problematic.

PUBLIC COMMENT #15

Two-way traffic within the Library lot would prevent using the book drop (in its current location) from the driver's side of a vehicle.