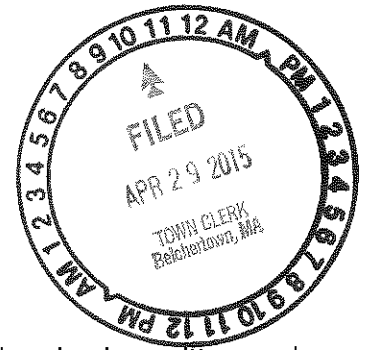


Belchertown Planning Board Minutes

April 14, 2015



Planning Board members: Daniel Beaudette, Christopher Laurenzo, James Natle, George Synan, Michael Hofler (Alternate Voting Member Special Permits), Sierra Pelletier (Associate Member).

Staff: Douglas Albertson - Town Planner, Susan Gay

The meeting was held at the Senior Center in preparation for a large audience consisting of town board and committee members and some staff.

Chris Laurenzo, Chairman opened the meeting at 7:00 pm and introduced Sarah Bankert of Healthy Hampshire and Stacey Beuttell of WalkBoston, who led multiple town boards, committees and staff in forum to discuss the future pedestrian accessibility along the Maple and State Streets corridor, the Common to the Courthouse.

The purpose of the forum is to get the whole community talking about walking and the planning for the area in anticipation of development on and around the state school campus. She is asking people to be proactive in the growth that is coming to the area as it develops. It is important to encourage accessibility and safety so everyone may feel safe to ride bicycles or walk.

A handout was provided that posed questions: "Why are we doing this work? What's ahead" and Get Involved". It explained development that is coming along the route 202/State Street corridor and it is important to plan to accommodate activities and uses along State Street, beyond just moving cars through. Pedestrian accessibility and safety is crucial. The handout also shows dates which have groups that will collaborate and focus with various people such as seniors, parents, students, as well as addressing the Americans with Disability Act.

In June of this year the data will be compiled and WalkBoston will give recommendations. Also in June the Zoning Action Plan by the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission will be done. It will analyze zoning, regulations, and more that will support or inhibit access to healthy food and physical activity. Finally in the Fall of 2015 MassBike will conduct a bike assessment of the corridor.

The handout also announced a way to receive progress updates by contacting Doug Albertson, Town Planner or Sarah Bankert, Healthy Hampshire.

Sarah would like to get opinions also from the senior population and what activity they have in this area. The group discussed the fact the location of the Hampshire Courthouse presently has no sidewalks and pedestrians have to walk in the roadway from the courthouse to any business up route 202 toward the common.

Sarah showed a presentation for which walkers = community = business thrives = employees = health care costs = affects budgets if the population is healthier. She noted that there are 150 million baby boomers coming into senior years. She said some areas of Massachusetts have a "walking score" that can give buyers an idea of what to expect in an area they may be interested in living or working in.

Discussed Pioneer Valley Transit Authority and how the bus route doesn't include the extension down to the courthouse but it may be helpful. A member of the audience asked how we begin to see Route 202 as a walkable corridor, and Sarah said we are all here to generate ideas.

The planning members noted that with some free time, they'd develop some proactive zoning and look to increase business and walkability in town. They'd like to specifically address sidewalks and have been diligent in developers putting sidewalks on one side of their development, so that there may be a safer route around their roadway for pedestrian traffic.

Another member of the audience noted the area in the rear of the police station called "Lake Wallace" was donated and should have a walk around implemented as part of a corridor. A walk around the former state school property should be carefully planned out as a way to encourage all the proposed assisted and independent living space that has been designed to come to the parcel, or the first phase of the growth.

This will be a continual process, the growth and the way in which the developers can keep the project pedestrian friendly and mobility a key aspect. The seniors at the center have indicated to the Council on Aging Director their hope to have a safe way in which to walk from the center to Almeida's for one instance.

Planning Board Minutes 4/14/15

Members of the EDIC brought up facts about population and challenges to move between destinations. Discussed the facts about parking in all areas of town, from up by the town common, to here by the area of Checkers store and the whole area surrounding the state school campus.

Some of the subjects Sarah brought up were: MassDevelopment's master plan for the state school campus, first draft which the EDIC said they'd be discussing tomorrow night; plan for assisted living facility (late Fall 2015?); New England Small Farm Institute site and trails; bus route extension to the courthouse; Jessica's playground; traffic flow and the school complex; possible Pride station corner of Rts. 21 & 202, other projected business development; and finally the potential use of a former rail bed located behind the area of Stadler Street.

The planning board thanked everyone for attending and beginning a conversation to plan ahead for a space to allow everyone to have walking or biking ability in that area as it grows.

Minutes: **Motion** J. Natle to accept minutes of February 24, 2015, Second D. Beaudette, Vote 4-0-0;

Motion J. Natle to accept minutes of March 10, 2015, Second D. Beaudette, Vote 4-0-0;

Motion G. Synan to accept minutes of March 24, 2015, Second D. Beaudette, Vote 4-0-0.

Christopher Laurenzo announced that he accepted a position at the Department of Public Works as Highway Supervisor and asked the board if they had any issue with him being the Chairman of this board at the same time. The board discussed the facts and asked that he check with the Ethics Commission on various issues that could come up before the board and whether there would be anything that would jeopardize either position.

Motion to adjourn D. Beaudette, Second J. Natle @ 9:45 pm, Vote 4-0-0.

Chi J...

out in

S. Blou...

