

TOWN OF STOW
Lower Village Sub-Committee and Planning Board

Minutes of the November 16, 2005, Lower Village Sub-Committee and Planning Board Meeting.

Present:

Don McPherson, Lower Village Sub-Committee
Bruce Fletcher, Lower Village Sub-Committee and Planning Board Member
Laura Spear, Lower Village Sub-Committee and Planning Board Member
Barbara Sipler, Lower Village Sub-Committee Member, Historical Society
Ernie Dodd, Planning Board Member
Karen Kelleher, Lower Village Sub-Committee and Master Plan Committee Member
Karen Gray, Historical Commission
Steve Ziegler, Star Framers (Lower Village Business Owner)
Joel Kadis, Linear Retail (Lower Village Shopping Center Owner)
Gary Hebert, Fay Spofford and Thorndike

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 AM.

Gary Hebert of Fay Spofford and Thorndike met with the Boards to provide an update on the Lower Village Traffic Study.

He presented a series of alternatives for discussion:

Alternative 1 – Sidewalk and Crossing Enhancements

- The plan shows 6' wide crosswalk medians designed to alert drivers that they are entering into the village.
- They looked at the potential of moving Pompositicut Street around the pond and determined that it would not be feasible because the result would make things worse at the White Pond Road intersection; it would cut off access to property owners and would be a big expense.
- Gary said that crosswalks should have medians and noted it would be difficult to have medians at the existing sidewalk locations because of conflicts with access to the shopping center. Bruce Fletcher said he came to the same conclusion.

Assumptions:

They looked at traffic using the assumption that traffic is increasing 20% in the next 15 years. The greatest impact will be through traffic. Don McPherson asked if they have an idea of the Bose traffic distribution. Gary responded yes, they reviewed the Bose Traffic Study, which included Pompositicut Street and Red Acre Road and found that most of the traffic goes to Route 495. He also noted that Bose traffic is added in off-peak hours. Laura Spear noted that it is most likely Clock Tower Place traffic that adds to the peak hour traffic.

Gary said that congestion will reach crisis level at 1,200 to 1,300 vehicles per hour. He assumes that Great Road will always be two lanes with areas for turnout.

Joel Kadis asked if he has an update on the estimate for the number of cars per peak hour. Gary noted it is in the technical memorandum. Karen will provide Joel with a copy.

Don McPherson recommended adding another curb cut between Buildings 3 and 5.

Gary Hebert said they recommend integrating Gardner Road into the Common, noting the Do Not Enter sign. Bruce Fletcher said the sign says “no through traffic” and therefore, it can be used for parking. He noted the original reason that it was left open was for emergency access. He was Highway Superintendent and on the Fire Department at the time it was proposed to close Gardner Road and it was determined that it should stay open in order to create access for emergency vehicles. There was also concern about a public way feeding into a private parking lot. Gary suggested looking into finding a way to trade an area with the property owner so you can use the parking lot as part of the public easement. Joel Kadis said the concept of a sense of arrival, providing a pretty area, is common sense. He feels the area in front of Papa Gino's needs improvement.

Alternative 2 – Roundabout/One Way Pair

Gary reviewed the plan, which shows 2 separate roundabouts, one at Red Acre Road and Pompositticut Street and the other (a one-way pair) around the Bank.

The one-way pair creates on-site parking for the bank and eliminates the drive-through. Gary said he does not feel comfortable with some issues relative to the one-way pair, such as land takings and a lot of changes to the Stow Plaza Site.

The plan for a roundabout at Red Acre Road and Pompositticut Street could incorporate one-way or two-way traffic outbound from Red Acre Road toward the roundabout. He recommends one-way to the roundabout and outbound to Gardner Road.

Gary said the center of the roundabout could be used as a gateway. Laura Spear said she likes the idea of the roundabout. She also noted that we are trying to create a visual link to the cemetery. Gary said the link should be accomplished with sidewalks and a green space island at Pompositticut Street.

Gary noted they are currently designing a roundabout on Route 134 in Dennis. He explained the difference between a modern roundabout and a rotary is that a rotary is larger and traffic is deflected into the roundabout.

Gary explained that a roundabout slows traffic down to 15-20 mph and could be placed in the location shown on the plan without the need for any land takings.

Karen Gray noted concern that the roundabout defeats the Historical Commission plans to potentially turn the Shoemaker house into a museum. She said if you divert Red Acre Road, it will make it more urban. Gary agrees that it would change the impact, noting there are trade-offs.

Gary said he will adjust the plan for the roundabout and bringing Gardner Road onto Route 117.

Alternative 3 – Traffic Signal Control

The plan shows a traffic signal at the westerly curb cut of the Shopping Center and a signal at Pompositticut Street. Joel said the drawback to a traffic signal is it creates a queue in Great Road. Joel Kadis suggested creating a right turn lane into the shopping center. Gary said that the right turn lane would take away from the Common. Joel

noted you could gain the green space back if you close Gardner Road. He also suggested landscaping with shrubs and low-level trees.

Discussion

Don McPherson asked about the previous proposal to bring Gardner Road out to Route 117. Gary Hebert said that proposal would shrink the common and surround it with traffic. Barbara Sipler said she does not like that idea. Don said it would eliminate an entrance into the shopping center and would be a net increase in green space. Joel Kadis said he would be okay with that proposal as long as they have three entrances. He likes the idea of green space.

Don McPherson suggested that a possible solution could be to eliminate a.m. left turns from Route 117 to Pompositticut Street. Gary said that would create a pretty significant impact on traffic at White Pond Road. Karen Kelleher said it would divert traffic through Maynard Center. Gary said he would be hesitant to make such a major change because it is not a neighborhood street. Don said you could also consider no left turn eastbound onto Pompositticut Street. Gary said the change would impact 600 people. Don said he would like to know if it would solve the queuing problem.

Heritage Landscape Inventory Program – Freedom’s Way Reconnaissance Survey

Karen Gray asked the Lower Village Sub-Committee to support the Stow Historical Commission’s Application to the Heritage Landscape Inventory Program – Freedom’s Way Reconnaissance Survey. If awarded, the grant would provide free technical assistance from staff at Department of Conservation and Recreation and volunteers from the Freedom’s Way Heritage Association, as well as expertise of professional assistance. This inventory would provide a resource to the Commission in their ongoing efforts to preserve historic landscapes. The grant would only result in an inventory, not a bylaw.

Members agreed to provide a letter of support.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Kelleher
Lower Village Committee Member