

**TOWN OF STOW
PLANNING BOARD**

Minutes of the November 23, 2010 Planning Board Meeting.

Present: Planning Board Members: Steve Quinn, Kathleen Willis, Lori Clark, Len Golder
and Ernest Dodd

Associate Member: Brian Martinson

Planning Coordinator: Karen Kelleher

The Meeting was called to order at 7 P.M.

Coler & Colantonio- Lower Village Existing Conditions Plan

Ken Caputo of Coler & Colantonio met with the Board to discuss the contract between the Planning Board and Coler & Colantonio for survey and transportation services for Lower Village.

Karen explained that it was initially planned to split the cost of the \$25,000.00 contract three ways between the Planning Board, Board of Selectmen and Highway Department. We have since found that the Highway Department was unable to get approval from the State to use Chapter 90 funds for this project. Karen noted that the scope of the contract can easily be split into two phases, the first phase being survey work and the second phase being transportation engineering work. Sufficient funds, from Planning Board and Board of Selectmen, are available for Phase I. On recommendation of the Town Administrator, Karen prepared a letter of agreement to be signed by Coler & Colantonio stating they understand they have authorization to proceed with phase I (survey scope of work) only and that phase II (Transportation Engineering) is on hold until funding is secured. It was further recommended that the Planning Board seek the additional funding at the Annual Town Meeting for Phase II.

Ken Caputo noted that he is surprised that the Highway Department was unable to secure Chapter 90 funds for this type of project, as Coler & Colantonio has done similar projects funded by chapter 90. Ken offered to work with Mike Clayton and the State to seek approval of Chapter 90 funds.

Ken also noted that he has found that it is best to approach these type of projects in steps, as there is no general contractor that "does it all". He noted that Norfolk first tried to fund the overall project, which included water, drainage, utilities and roadway improvements under one contract and the project was rejected. They then separated the project into steps and ultimately gained approval for the entire project. Ken said he can help Stow in establishing program steps and seeking funding sources.

Ken also noted that if you are revitalizing an area, burying utilities and maximizing open space, it could result in an immediate positive impact on the look of Lower Village. He said there are creative ways to fund burying utilities. Members noted that Hudson Light and Power provides electric power to Stow. Kathleen Willis noted that some communities have moved the utility poles to the back of sites, which is less expensive.

Ken said that the Town needs to be cautious about knowing what you can afford before trying to sell the plan.

He sees the survey work as the first step in a long-term project.

Under Phase I (Survey), Coler & Colentonio will complete a base plan of existing conditions including all surface identifiable features, detailed topography, underground utilities and detailed right of way. Stow will have a complete existing conditions plan in auto cad format to be used for design and development. The plan will include detail spot elevations and all surface details. This plan will be able to be used by anyone that is contracted for additional steps in the overall plan. He will review the plan with the Highway Department for input and then present it to the Board.

Phase II (Transportation) of this contract will be a plan based on the concept plans prepared by FST. They will design the details to accurate specs and evaluate the alternatives to see how they fit with the existing conditions plan and impacts on drainage, utility poles and private properties.

The final plan will show alternative roadway and open space layouts; definition of future program elements, phases and order of magnitude cost estimates; definition of potential funding sources; and approach for program implementation. He sees his role, as project manager, to assist the Board in gaining buy-in from the Highway Department, Lower Village Committee and Board of Selectmen on a final preferred plan.

Ken said he does have some initial concern with a 5-leg roundabout. He noted that if you try to force fit a roundabout it doesn't work. As an example, the Town of Duxbury installed a roundabout and had to force fit it resulting in a "no yield" situation as you enter the roundabout, which is problematic. He said Stow should also consider if the roundabout would be best for a gateway. He strongly recommends that it is most important to determine goals before considering solutions.

Lori Clark suggested that Karen share the goals that the Planning Board has been working on.

Ken said once you determine goals, you need to collaborate with the Highway Department and the Board of Selectmen on alternatives, approach to a means to an end, and estimate real costs. It won't be one project and won't be done in a year. It is best for the project to be broken down into components and then be packaged with a budget and program approach.

In response to an inquiry about major flooding from this past spring, the Board responded that although there were no "significant" flooding problems, the Highway Department is very concerned about the age and condition of the existing drainage system in the Lower Village. Ken Caputo said Coler & Colentonio would work with the Highway Department to gain a better understanding of the drainage.

Members noted that they see this project as a means to encourage new smart development and redevelopment. Ken said Coler & Colentonio would gain a better understanding of future private property plans or ideas through planned public workshops.

1. Members noted that temporary traffic calming islands were installed and it was found that they have been very successful in slowing down traffic and reducing traffic incidents. The Lower Village Committee requested that the Highway Department install permanent traffic islands. The Highway department is hesitant to install permanent islands at this time if there is a chance they will need to be removed as a result of this project. Members asked Ken if they could take a look at these areas to identify advantages and disadvantages of early implementation.

Members noted that, although the roundabouts were a significant feature of the previous efforts in planning for the Lower Village, the Board does not believe that the Town as a whole is married to this idea at this point. Ken Caputo said Coler & Colentonio would need to look at and evaluate other alternatives before settling on the roundabouts.

The next meeting is scheduled for January 4, 2011 at 7:00 PM. Coler & Colentonio will bring progress material for the survey and aerial of the Lower Village for open discussion. The primary purpose of this meeting is to listen to the ideas that the Board has and any input that can be gained from the public or other Town officials in attendance.

It is his expectation to have the first draft existing conditions plan done mid-January (weather permitting). The Traffic phase will be completed sometime in the spring of 2011.

Ken said graphics/aerials will be brought to all future meetings to aid in the discussion

JOINT BOARDS MEETING – HOUSING PRODUCTION PLAN

Members then attended the Board of Selectmen's Joint Boards meeting on the Housing Production Plan.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Kelleher
Planning Coordinator