8/6/2020 - Minutes

I. Call to Order

Commission Members Present: Christopher Page, Laura Dlugolecki, Jason Williams, Corey Mack

City Staff Present: Jon Rauscher

Community Members Present: Seth Gillim, Britta Tonn, Jefferson Rush

Meeting called to order by Commission Chair, Laura Dlugolecki

Meeting start time: 6:31 PM

II. Public Comment

None

III. Approve Previous Meeting Minutes

Motion by Jason to approve

Seconded by Corey

Motion carried.

IV. Maple Street safety improvements letter

Background from Jon

- Jon received letter from folks on Maple Street with some safety/transportartion improvement requests.
- Similar to what was done for other one-way street request, run through commission and get some feedback to pass along to Jessie on how to move forward.
- We are proposing to plant street trees on Mpale Street, so that is in the works. Also, activity on Maple Street, attempting to chase what perhaps as water main break. We are looking to resurface the street this summer, in the next month or two. Going to maintain the existing street bumps; looking to resurface Union and Maple this summer.

Seth Gillim, Maple Street Resident:

- Understanding of requests for traffic calming, how that fits into broader strategy for traffic calming and safety in the city. However, letter felt particularly prompted as a unique case in terms of traffic and traffic habits.

Jason: Thoughts about two things: 1) more placement of those radar signs in general as a

traffic calming measure; more around city in general could be very helpful. 2) Proliferation of children at this time on these streets make this appropriate and urgent, but how can we avoid doing this without one-offs (i.e. street by street)? Maple seems particularly tucked in, more of a neighborhood street; we should think holistically, though that should not stop some improvements from being made now.

Laura: Letter was full of great suggestions. Commission had recently discussed another calming idea. Feedback previously had included that emergency services really do not like one-way streets, so that is a concern/consideration. Installation of physical barriers that might make movement a little slower?

Jeff: Following up on Seth, unfortunate about one-way streets not being preferable, but is it possible to make speed bumps larger? Almost comically large? Near student center in Middlebury, they are very much prohibitive. Thoroughfare going form Main St down to Malletts Bay, people are driving fast on the street, speeding, using as a shortcut, extraordinarily fast. Been working from home and it's become much more noticeable. If we cannot get one way, can we get third speed bump?

Corey: As a transportation planner, hear many complaints about speed bumps and speed bump placement. The ideas in the letter are all good ideas; but, definitely problems with really large speed bumps (plows), unintended consequence; sometimes restrictions in water flow.

Jeff: Wasn't suggesting actually comically large, but perhaps if slightly larger than existing and a third one. Maple Street was historically a dead-end.

Seth: Something specifically about Maple that makes it challenging: Our proximity to traffic circle and that we are a connector street, but also: between Weaver and Main, incredibly narrow. Cars coming in off of Main must swing partly into opposite lane due to radius, often endangering children using the road. Challenging turning conditions, when accounting for radius, not feasible. At other end of Maple, dangerous sight lines, so it would be great to have some form of pedestrian enhancements in the context of very real possibility of increased development in the area, including housing, which would increase traffic flow. Generally high traffic area. No way to safely walk down Maple street to reach the library without taking detours on other side streets, or else walk in the middle of the road.

While one-way street issues make sense, there are real safety risks posed by the existing construction, should be addressed preemptively rather than reactively.

Chris P.: Have there been turning studies on the Main/Maple intersection for the Main Street reconstruction? Shouldn't they have caught this issue, and might that issue be resolved by Main Street work?

Jon: Turning studies for each intersection, and mainly focused on truck turning studies not passenger vehicles. They assume existing geometries are adequate for regular vehicles. Testing did not assume that turning models would be required at Maple Street. We should run turning models there to see if improvements can be factored into Main Street revitalization. Beyond that, City agrees that Maple Street has a unique situation, extremely narrow pavement, tough geometries, steep slope, and submitted a thorough and detailed letter request. Street is being repaved this season, so we can go back and take a look at

improvements we can do with those speed humps/speed tables. Could also collect data (including speed data) or reach out to CCRPC and get some traffic counts, throw more data into the process.

Britta: What does it take to get a SLOW: Children At Play sign? I bought temp signs with stakes to put all over street, but don't know if data shows whether those are effective. The prevalence of children out on the street is a primary issue; would hope that someone would slow down upon seeing a sign like that. What is the process?

Jon: Worked in a municipality with urban part of town and rural part of town. In an urban setting, you are supposed to assume that there are children in the neighborhood, it is assumed and you should be going speed limit… In rural section, thosve signs might be more applicable because presence of children is not assumed. We typically don't put those signs up in the urban areas such as Winooski.

Corey: Generally, with these types of signs, very little change of behavior occurs. Like deer Xing signs… might be an actual presence of more deer, but drivers often ignore them.

Laura: Near Hall and North, there is a warning sign beneath stop sign that warns of rolling stop fine $$. Not sure if it has had an effect, but it had an effect on me for certain. Is that an option?

Jon: Probably a fair and easy request. Those signs catch my attention; one on Winooski Falls Way… does catch my eye.

Jefferson Rush: Another thought: Those speed bumps might be one of the better solutions. The existing speed bumps are kind of flat. Could we split the difference? Paint them yellow and make them larger? I appreciate that you get calls from a lot of streets, but I've lived in NYC and Pittsburgh and have not seen the kind of brazen speeding as exists on this block. Neighbors, children all outside. It is absurd.

Jon: Will increase police presence, PD outside for a few days. If it's the same person or same few people, might slow them down for a while.

Corey: If you collect speed data for a week, you can use that to get the PD involved and target enforcement, because often the people who are doing this are the same people. Collecting data, including traffic volume, is really important if we were to consider changing traffic flow (one-way, etc). Crash data could also support the case, and should be available.

Seth: Any enforcement along four-way stop near Weaver and Maple would be appreciated. We have not one but two social clubs, one on Weaver and one on Maple, that see a lot of traffic from folks who don't live in the neighborhood or even on Winooski. I would say, anecdotally, the folks living in the neighborhood are much less likely to blow through stop sign than visitors. Enforcement action may be what is required to send message, and would be welcome.

Jon: As a longer-term heads-up, in transportation master plan, one of our goals is to create traffic-calming policy, so that is on to-do list this year with RPC to create framework to review requests like this one. Temporary installations, like bumpouts… get feedback…

determine if people are on-board, if so, install as permanent. This is longer-term, but that is the City's goal, because it doesn't benefit the City to do ad hoc requests… having metrics can help.

Jason: Can we see that policy, because that's very interesting? Additionally, is there any kind of analysis that could be done before complaints are even filed by residents… i.e., is there a way to turn this all into an affirmative effort rather than a responsive one?

Jon: Policy will be on PWC work plan for 2021, so PWC will be helping to build framework. Known cut streets, reaching out to those neighbors ahead of time, traffic calming would make sense, here is what we're proposing.

Seth: Lastly, could you speak as to why there is no sidewalk at the end of Maple Street? Is it related to grade? Has there been conversation around that before? Does City not have ROW?

Jon: Purely ROW/real estate issue… ROW shrinks to 30 ft at lower section, and would need easement and likely some fill mat'l to build and maintain. City can review that, but Jon has never heard any background on why this hasn't come up more. It is steep, but ADA compliance (5% slope, existing grade) might not apply because it's a natural grade (naturally >5%). No concern with steepness, specifically lack of real estate without easements.

Corey: Sidewalk between Weaver and Main on North side is realtively new; they actually widened it from 4 ft to five ft, and now travel is narrower.

Jeff: No one is anyone on that sidewalk. Many New Americans also use these sidewalks.

Corey: Do we have next steps? Would like to see volumes/data, but that's a scoping study, probably not the turnaround time.

Jon: Since we will be resurfacing, plan is to address speed hump size and adjust as needed. Next steps to check with PD on speeding, get there to collect some data, and get CCRPC to collect data; this will allow us to determine if additional traffic calming measures are appropriate.

Chris: PD presence can make a big difference. Let's hope that it helps while we sort other components out.

Maple Street residents thank commission for their time, end of discussion.

V. Main Street Revitalization Project Landscape design presentation

Presentation by Michael Willard from VHB. Quick overview; tail end of 60% design phase, going to present to council the first meeting in September, looking to get some alternatives for PWC to review an provide opinions on, to add to presentation to council and move forward on.

start of slideshow presentation by MW

Last time we chatted was back in December. In 60% design plans, so have taken thoughts from previous meeting and put them into plan view, start showing what it could look like. To recap what we had heard:

- Materials
- Pulling city together as far as streetscape elements
- Brick paving, stone pavers where recent redevelopment occurred; pull from similar palette as extension of Main Street at circulator
- Pulled together graphics to show what that looks like

2 Scenarios

Storefront block: all retailers on bottom floor, true commercial storefront engagement area. Given add'l special treatment; restaurants, café seating, signage, sandwich boards

- Reviewed slice of street between Stevens and LaFountain
- Brick pavers in sidewalk
- "Sidewalk" vs "Amenity Zone" pavers

Big change: Based on form-based code, retail development will come forward right to parcel boundary -0- lot line, so store fronts are really engaging with sidewalk. Model intends to show full buildout scenario. Brick pavers against storefronts (pedestrian zone); granite/stone pavers shown in amenity zone, with street trees and outdoor seating as examples.

Street trees with tree grates. Granite pavers in amenity zone, granite curb. Some sort of new street light as well.

Corey: Width of zones?

From face of bldg. to edge of pedestrian zone: 7 ft; amenities zone = 5.5 ft.

Corey: Snow removal situation; are we removing snow, or just piled in amenities zone or prop mgmt. issue with adjacent development?

Jon: our plan is to be storing snow in amenities zone. For sidewalk plow, we have blade and blower and can rotate blade to push it that way. Bldgs with bump-ins will be required to shovel out. A little tricky w/ zero lot line, making sure no damage to bldgs.

Jason: I didn't see any of the accent pavers in the model

Not that level of detail yet… could be some fun put into the patterns, could be accents and paver bands added to add variety/interest to paving.

Corey: Consistent fixtures, or not that level of detail yet?

Light fixtures are the last slide, and we'll have a conversation about that… something different but that can tie in aesthetically.

Jon: internally, also a discussion of some development in not-too-distant future, does it make sense to install pavers and then have a developer come and have to excavate for a basement and eliminate pavers then have to put them back down; do we install it and then they have to replace, or do we a more standard Cr sidewalk and then put a standard in place that when there is development, you are required to put in pavers of spec type; reality is, they probably won't match (if 5-year difference), mish-mosh paver systems.

All pavers come from different batch plants… even if you order same paver from manufacturer 5 yrs down the road, it'd be a patchwork quilt, differences in between. Even in same factory.

Proposal is that these pavers will be "bomb-proof"; circulator pavers are on a "flexible" base, there are areas where pavers roll and rise, dips and humps (near tree grates), subtleties occurring as differential settling occurs; NOT ideal for Main Street, "armored" situation with no differential settling, installed over a concrete subslab. Pavers could then be removed, foundations dug, then pavers reset on subslab. Similar to Church Street when utility work is done.

Laura: If a new property owner was redeveloping a site and damaged the pavers, it would be on them to fix them, correct?

Jon: Yes, correct.

Mike, alternative/feedback for this area? Nothing specific needed, and we can move on if no further comments.

CP: Seems to hit the notes we discussed in previous meeting, looks good.

Mike, alternative/feedback for this area? Nothing specific needed, and we can move on if no further comments. CP: Seems to hit the notes we discussed in previous meeting, looks good.

Storefront vs. typical section; break occurs in intersection.

Jon: In regards to SW management, because we are adding add'l impervious, we are required to do some SW quality management; we may look at that brick paver amenity belt as a potentially pervious paver; no WQ treatment, but ,ay reduce amt required by reducing impervious. Thoughts on that? Could change?

Mike : Amenity zone can be whatever we need or want it to be. Have done the pervious paver move before in SB; reduced SW capacity downstream in SW treatment area because of in situ infiltration nsidewalk; pervious pavers work well, but biggest rub is lackf of commitment to maintenance causes them to have a big hurdle; must be vac'd out 2x annually and aggregate btw pavers gets replaced. Sand finds its ay on sidewalks, settles in, and slowly clogs system if not maintained. Otherwise, work great, clay pavers just spaced out slightly further so water can work its way through. Trees will receive more water to root systems because of pervious material above. Permeable pavers are actually slightly less expensive because you do not have 5" Cr subslab below, the material. Clay pavers are put down with nubs that create natural spacer. Straight edge pavers shown; hand-tight, so joint in btw is v tight; in permeable, joint itself is made looser and larger, space is permeable area. 3/8" gap filled with permable material.

Corey: consideration of it as a green strip?

Jon: That may come up as a council item. It is possible. Issues with maintenance; failure to maintain constantly have to mow grass strip, erosion visible near Burling where it is steep, difficult time keeping that from eroding because of SW coming down there. Mike, thoughts as far as landscape design?

Mike: Most munic have bee nshying away from green strips for 1 maintenance and 2) pedestrian foot traffic, so that "lawn" never really fulfills itself and you end up with packed dirt.

Corey: Width of pedestrian?

Mike: Same dimensions, 7 ft ped. Zone and 5.5 ft wide amenities zone.

Corey: Good to see that sidewalk will be wider than typical 5 ft.

Jon: Tree grate size, construction, soil volume?

Mike: 4x6 grate. Lack of proper soil volume ends up being larger issue, built environment around them; structural material (aggregate, etc.) is not very suitable for long-term sustainability of trees, so we are proposing two different options: 1) Silvi-Cells, creating a suspended soil volume so that the hardscape system is supported above, but underneath is a great loam soil, system was designed for urban environments, Toronto has made it their standard; tree roots grow in loam soil and can fulfill life expectancy and canopy. Typical urban street tree 15 yrs or less via trad methodology (teacup approach); Silvi-Cells seek to maximize that lifespan. 2) Structural soil, developed by Cornell U 20 years ago.

Jon: A likely item to discuss with council… cost?

Mike: Estimate shows it to be ~$408 / cell… as shown, Silvi-Cells only being proposed for store block area; structural soil for north and south of storefront block.

Jason: For what it's worth, best possible methods are ideal, we are a tree-star city.

Laura: Agreed, it is a good investment; look near Cascade Way, most trees died and are now being replaced (additional cost), investment is worthwhile.

Anecdotally, Bartlett tree lab on different growth rates; Silvi-Cells have only been, fairly new in industry, but results are unbelievable. Used in St Albans; growth has been remarkable. Monitored growth for 3 years, second summer of growth on Honey Locusts, 12-18" growth extensions. Tree canopy has many major effects, microclimates, sets scene and curb, urban heat island condition, long-term (mature size) tree canopy acts as rainfall intercept; through evapotranspiration, tree holds so much water (Greg MacPhee, USDA); been promoting urban tree canopies for SW treatment for 30 years; huge advocate.

Unanimous commission agreement for Silvi-Cells. Will look at costs (and net cost difference btw structural soil) for increased Silvi-Cell use beyond storefront block area.

Review of hardscape and trees: Honey Locust, Red Maple (Silver cross to handle salt conditions), Linden (honey bees love them; pollinator trees). Think of Burlington around 3rd wk of June, upper section of Main Street is all Linden, incredible smell. Trees loaded with pollinators. Great street tree and pollinator habitat.

Comments on trees/hardscape palette board? Nope.

Lighting discussion… Down at the circulator, there is a modern fixture (looks a bit like a desk lamp), predominantly in that zone. Moving up through zone, variety of three other fixtures, currently all LED; some on utility poles, others on tapered aluminum, some silver-gray, some black.

Commission preferred post-top style. 2 purposes: 1) illuminate the roadway, creating vehicular safety, midblock crossings, roadway safety based on national standards 2) needs to do some backlighting so you illuminate sidewalk and pedestrian zone behind it. General consensus was not in favor of moving the lower fixtures up street.

Five on bottom trying to balance post-stop style to balance pedestrian and roadway lighting.

Which ones do we like or don't like? Thoughts? Early stages in lighting, establish what that wants to be…

Laura: Difference in light "cone"? Any differences in light performance?

Mike: All lights will be LED… ~3000K color temperature

Big decision to make: establishes city standard, for this corridor and beyond… can have MANY implications, and is a much deeper dive, once we figure out design direction, then we can get after it to get samples, etc. Long-term consequences.

Commission discusses options… generally find C and D most favorable. Jon also voices support for D.

C has mounting arm, whereas D is post-top. Any preference of that style?

Commission agrees that post-top is preferable to arms.

Jon: Concern re: maintenance: with C, considerably more work, post-top is simpler/preferable to us. Currently, GMP owns street lights on Main Street. They would become new assets for City to maintain.

General support for option D; Mike will take that feedback and look for more options in that family with that top and aesthetic.

And that concludes presentation.

Corey: What level of design are we at in overall project status?

Jon: Quick update: 60% design but heading into 90% pretty soon; just had meeting with

ANr to review water resource 60% design; our goal is to get out to bid for Spring construction. Right now, will take some time all permits etc., main focus will be to line those things up.

Corey: I imagine there is an estimate at 60%; where does that stand?

Jon: Well below bond vote; as it stands, total construction cost = $15.7M based on 60% design, includes contingency, does not include soft costs. This includes all undergrounding. Tracking well below prior estimates of $20M; undergrounding costs are down around $2.8M, had been substantially higher in preliminary estimates.

Corey: Contamination?

Jon: Some petroleum contamination; many gas stations up thru corridor through the years. Initially found osme PCBs in initial soil investigation work, which was bothersome, but must have been cross contamination issue; add'l borings did not yield further data (all non-detect), so we are in the clear. Mainly petroleum.

Laura: Thanks for presenting. Next steps are for this to be presented to council in Sept?

Jon: Yes, full council update. Present these slides (more or less), where we're going based on feedback form commission. Is this OK with commission?

Commission, Yes.

VI. Department and City Updates

Covered informally at end of Item V, not taken up as specific agenda item on 8/6.

VII. Adjourn

Movement by Jason; seconded by CP. All in favor. Adjourned at 8:07 PM.