



City of Westfield
MEETING MINUTES

RECEIVED

AUG 7 2023

WESTFIELD CITY CLERK

Master Plan Committee - March 21, 2023
City Hall Room 315

Master Plan Committee members in attendance: Chair Jay Ducharme, Sharon Greany, Bill Schneeloch, Richard Salois (PB), Jennifer Battles, Jillian Battles (@6:08), Alexandra Smialek (remotely), Les Pooler, Agma Sweeney (remotely @ 5:32), Melissa Trzasko (remotely). Also attending: Jay Vinskey (City Planner) and Christine Fedora (Secretary).

Members not attending: Brent Bean (CC), Bernie Puza (PB), Harrison Stefano, Maureen Socha (WSU), Rania Kfuri, Rick Berry.

A quorum being present, Chair Ducharme called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m.

- A. Public participation Chair Ducharme asked if anyone would like to speak. None
- B. Approval of Minutes. On a motion to approve the minutes of 11/15/22 & 1/17/23:

Bill Schneeloch	-	yes
Les Pooler	-	yes
Alexandra Smialek	-	yes
Richard Salois	-	yes
Jennifer Battles	-	yes
Melissa Trzasko	-	yes
Jay Ducharme	-	yes
Agma Sweeney	-	yes
Sharon Greany	-	yes

C. Master Plan Development

Consultant Jim Riordan gave a review of the topics to be discussed:

- Comments on Goals, Policies, and Actions
- Goals, Policies, and Actions for Transportation
- Introductory Section Outline
- Next Steps

Comments will be incorporated into updated sections. They are working on putting the plan together and hoping to get that out prior to the next meeting and schedule the public session.

Mr. Riordan reviewed the Goals, Polices, Actions for the Transportation Section:

Goals

1. *Maintain and enhance a cost-effective, efficient, safe, and accessible multi-modal transportation system.*
2. *Support efforts to enhance and increase alternative modes of transportation such as ride shares, bicycling, and public transportation.*

Ms. Sweeney mentioned the John Olver transportation center was designed with a vision that there would be a building next to it, which never happened. She felt there is a vacuum, she suggested it needs to be reworked. Plantings something to make it less disconnected, she suggested this could possibly be something in the plan.

Chair Ducharme also mentioned the parking garage that was proposed at one time. There is a plan for the area being turned into a more of a public gathering space. Planner Vinskey stated this would be an interim solution and the building development is still envisioned.

Ms. Smialek felt there should be a distinction between downtown transportation/transit and city-wide transportation issues. The actions and goals should be specific as to what type of transportation was being discussed.

Mr. Ducharme felt another item would be to rethink the traffic flow in downtown. A lot of pressure points and rethinking the flow of traffic could alleviate some of that. He mentioned Arnold Street with the bus station; suggested making it one way towards Elm Street. Other areas of concern mentioned were: Mass Pike Jug Handle, North Elm Street corridor. The possibility of a walkway bridge was also discussed in the area of Mestek.

Mr. Riordan suggested a city wide analysis of traffic might be better than specific locations in the Master Plan- by doing so you could be committing the city to a specific area without context. He felt these items discussed should actions. Walkability could be added to Goal 2. Mr. Riordan suggested a city-wide traffic audit or traffic safety audit would look at different forms of transportation and how to make better pedestrian access, bicycle access within the context of existing traffic flow as well as a safety audit.

Policies

1. *Implement road-design and maintenance standards and procedures that protect, promote, and encourage existing development patterns and neighborhood character.*
2. *Maintain a formal program for road maintenance, new road construction, and accompanying drainage infrastructure that is economically responsible and implementable.*
3. *Promote cooperative state and local efforts in transportation planning to help ensure that the City's mix of urban and rural character is considered as part of transportation planning and construction projects.*
4. *Encourage alternative modes of transportation and increase opportunities in the City for access to biking, walking, and carpooling, especially for a growing senior population.*
5. *Implement policies and actions that will promote safety through reducing traffic conflicts and crashes.*
6. *Ensure that new development and redevelopment is consistent with the City's Complete Streets program.*

Chair Ducharme asked if the City maintains a formal program for road maintenance. Planner Vinskey mentioned the city was thinking of purchasing a software program that would prioritize/track road maintenance projects; he could check with the City Engineer. Ms. Smialek felt this would be beneficial to the environment as well. Mr. Salois noted a proactive program takes a lot of effort it needs someone driving it, that is why most communities have a reactive approach. Salois felt that the proactive program is something the city should pursue.

Planner Vinskey mentioned there was 5 million dollars allocated before last winter (citing a Masslive article), the city's plan for next year is another 5 million for the roads. These allocations were based on assessments based on a 2019 comprehensive road analysis plan.

Mr. Riordan stated the complete streets program envisions right of way use for vehicle traffic, public transportation, cycling, foot traffic and set up to make sure all can be used safely and not conflicting with one another.

Actions

1. *Submit project applications based on the City's Complete Street Prioritization Plan for up to \$400,000 in Complete Streets funding.*

Chair Ducharme inquired if \$400,000 is the maximum? Following discussion it was suggested the amount be changed to read "As much as eligible to apply for." Lead Party: change to Engineering

2. *Continue to actively participate in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) through the Pioneer Valley MPO, to ensure that state roads in the City are adequately maintained and improved, including maintaining a local priority list for inclusion on the TIP.*

Vinskey noted Engineering would be the lead party on both. The DPW maintains things, big projects the funding would go through the Engineering

3. *Maintain relationship with the Pioneer Valley Transportation Authority and the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission to continually assess and update the level of bus service in the City.*

Change lead party to Community Development/Mayor

4. *Work to improve access to safe and convenient alternative modes of transportation such as biking, walking, and carpooling.*

Lead party should be Engineering; City Council as support party (funding). Friends of Rail trail Greenway could also be a support group. Mr. Riordan noted the reason for not putting a lot of these separate agencies is because the City has no control over them.

Vinskey felt this was more of a policy rather than action; suggested change of wording to "identify opportunities for..."

5. *Continue to provide and increase funding for locally maintained transportation infrastructure (roadways and drainage) to ensure a high level of services to the community.*
6. *Continue to support the Department of Public Works by providing and maintaining the necessary equipment and personnel to maintain roadways, sweep streets, remove snow, and maintain drainage infrastructure.*

Lead party on these should be Mayor or DPW; if Mayor not on board won't get funding in budget.

Vinskey suggested adding something about improvements to the jug handle area/MassPike slip ramp.

Mr. Riordan briefly discussed the outline for the introductory chapter.

D. Next tasks

Members to review and get any additional comments to the City Planner within 2 weeks.

It was suggested the public plan rollout session be sometime in May. Members felt it should be held on the North Side, possibly at the Intermediate School. Planner Vinskey will try to arrange a venue by the next meeting.

Mr. Salois departed at 6:58PM. The meeting was adjourned at 7:00PM

