

Maine Street Station Oversight Committee

April 10, 2008 Minutes

Attendees: MSS Oversight Committee Members: Councilors Margo Knight, Ben Tucker and David Webb; Town Staff: Anna Breinich, Mat Eddy, Amanda Similien; JHR Staff: Mike Lyne, Hilary Rocket; MACTEC Staff: Peter Baker; Councilor Karen Klatt; Citizens: Sarah Brayman, Michael Dube, George Gilmore, Marji Greenhut, Alex Greenlee, Mary Heath, Marilyn Nulman, George Phipps, Tricia Welch

Review of Financials and Outstanding Proposals:

EPA informed the Brunswick Department of Economic Development (DED) that the proposal for the \$1 million Revolving Loan Fund was not granted. Mat explained the strategy for funding with the effects of this news: the Town needs approximately \$2.35million to do the infrastructure for inside the fence. DED has received grants and funds totaling \$1.3 available currently, and has proposals out for \$2.35million more. If we receive more than the needed amount to finish inside the fence, we will be able to work on improvements in the surrounding neighborhoods, such as Noble and Union Street upgrades, sidewalk upgrades, and also the Town participation in the traffic remediation around First Parish Church.

The Brunswick Department of Economic Development has submitted the Letter of Intent to the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Economic Development (ED) grant (\$400,000) for roads. DECD will be coming to meet with staff and look at the application the week of April 14.

Mat believes that we should compete with the \$500,000 proposal to the Municipal Investment Trust Fund very well with the point system for where we are in the process, having a developer, being in the review process, and ready to go. Amanda said that more information on the grant process could be found at www.meocd.org.

The Economic Development Association (EDA) application (\$850,000) for infrastructure is still in the EDA process of local nomination, regional nomination, and then the review committee (where it is now). Contacts at EDA said that they like the project and Maine's congressional delegation is keeping an eye on this.

Remediation remaining on the site is at the corner of Maine Street and the project entrance, and then the south side of the Bowdoin property between the parking lots.

Marji Greenhut asked if there will be a structural analysis of the homes and buildings surrounding the remaining remediation areas prior to commencement of the remaining process. Peter Baker of MACTEC said that MACTEC will do a preconstruction survey of surrounding buildings and monitor through the process, with hope to begin this at the end of the summer, at the same time the infrastructure should be going in.

Another attendee asked about the 20% match for the Brownfield grant and whether the Town can use any of the other funds we have coming in to the project. Mat said that we used \$60k of the remaining funds for the final piece of remediation on the north side.

Sarah Brayman asked if there were more involved financial information for the project, such as tax base, full operational costs for upkeep, ongoing costs, \$24 million project value estimate, and the estimated \$528,000 tax return on investment. Mat answered that the Town will do a very preliminary study of costs of upkeep- plow, parks and other ideas. There has not been an update of the estimated project value estimate included in the joint development agreement (JDA).

Cedar Street Lot:

Mat described the Cedar Street lot maintenance: coverage would come out of the tax increment financing (TIF) from Maine Street Station. If the Town will agree to "TIF" the property, then maintenance and other upkeep are all eligible costs. DOT is only willing to deal with the Town on this lot and will not turn the management over to a private party. The cost share would have to be across the DOT park-and-ride, Maine Eastern Railroad, and the Town if they were to try to share the maintenance. An example is the Bank Street Municipal lot: essentially the town maintains it and the businesses use it. The taxes that the businesses pay cover the maintenance.

Currently discussions are happening between Town staff, DOT and the Seventh Day Adventists to work on design concepts and cost estimates for the upgrade of the Cedar Street lot, the pedestrian access, and the railroad crossing through the Seventh Day Adventist property on Union Street.

Mary Heath asked how the decision to use the Cedar Street lot was made. Mat said that the decision was not final yet, that it has to go in front of council for approval, via a presentation by Mat, potentially the first meeting in May, and then also in front of the planning board.

DOT is exempt from the Town approval process and could do to this lot what works best for them. If the Town takes over management, we would control the design, do Phase 2 testing for coal ash and upgrade pedestrian and auto access. An attendee asked that the Town ask the citizens if this is what they want.

An attendee asked if the Town would be responsible for the costs of the upgrades to the lot if DOT does not contribute to the costs. Mat said that the lot and its management is not a part of the JDA, but if the Town Council and Planning Board decide it should be done, then yes, the Town will cover the costs. The process will have to go through a formal agreement with DOT and the lawyers, too. Mat and Town staff still believe that it is better if the Town manages it as there have been issues with DOT's management and the agency's other potential ideas for the lot could be worse than our ideas. All these factors will be looked at during the process. The Town wants to be proactive with the neighbors and anticipate the impact it will have. Neighbors have voiced their desire to see it cleaned up, improved, landscaped, etc.

Parking:

An attendee noted that 550 parking spaces in this region within the next two years adds a lot of asphalt to the area and asked if the project could be scaled back. Mike Lyne of JHR said that if the project were scaled back more, there would be more surface parking in the project.

An attendee asked about the sequencing of the parking process, phasing, and mixed use spaces and the possibility of parking garages. Mat said that it is not unusual that towns, during the redevelopment of downtowns, will turn empty lots into short-term parking solutions due to existing needs and not to shut the door on future development and redesign.

Marji Greenhut asked why a ramp or car elevator hadn't been added to the hotel lots. Mike answered that there wasn't room for a ramp and the car elevator was cost-prohibitive.

Parking Garage:

Mat presented costs for developing a 500-car garage and described the following table of approximate high and low values for a garage (Note: the Town's computer server was down and he could not print this table for distribution at the meeting):

	Cost Analysis-Parking Garage	
	\$15,000 per space	500 car garage \$25,000 per space
cost	\$ 7,500,000.00	\$ 12,500,000.00
FTA grant earmark	\$ 1,000,000.00	\$ 1,000,000.00
	\$ 6,500,000.00	\$ 11,500,000.00
Finance cost per year	\$ 529,750.00	\$ 937,250.00
Fixed Costs per year	\$ 132,000.00	\$ 132,000.00
Total Costs per year	\$ 661,750.00	\$ 1,069,250.00
cost per space per month	\$ 110.29	\$ 178.20
Tax value of MSS Full TIF	\$ 528,000.00	\$ 528,000.00
With TIF applied, cost/space	\$ 22.29	\$ 90.21
Market cost per space now	\$30	

The current market is ~\$30 per space per month- lower than either of the above estimates, and it's difficult in this area to get people to pay for it. Currently, neither the market, nor the projected user base justifies a garage. In 10 years when/if the commuter train comes and the user base grows, it can be revisited, but those are difficult costs to get over at this point. In response to attendees' questions, he said that Lewiston's new garages are all steel structures, which has a very high fixed cost price. He also said that he would obtain the projected costs and payment scheme for the recently-approved parking garage in Auburn.

Ben Swan said that we need to consider aesthetics versus the cost of having a downtown feel. Do we want a landscape of cars or greenspace and we need to ask the residents about the trade off. He said that he personally would support a tax increase for a parking garage. He also said that these questions should be brought up before the Town Council.

Peter Baker said that there is the technical ability to have a garage between buildings 4 and 6, but the feasibility of one would only allow for about 60 spaces in three stories. The site narrowness makes it very inefficient to have a garage. To get more bang for your buck we need to look to the other side of Union Street when that is available and instead do infill of buildings and green areas on the Phase 1 site when appropriate.

Traffic Circle around First Parish:

Mat went over the new concept plan with the group. He said that this project was in place prior to the Maine Street Station, and we have been working on it for years. An issue with the previous concept plan was that the proposed signal at Bath Road and Maine Street “failed immediately” and backed up to Hannaford. The two left-turning lanes on to Bath Road required to ameliorate that backup took 30 feet away from Bowdoin’s property.

The concept now being proposed is a modified rotary, with a narrower right-of-way through Maine Street, a left turn onto Bath Road with a signal between that lane and the right turn onto Bath road from the opposite direction (creating breaks in the traffic for merging and pedestrians). Then the vehicles will be able to loop around the church and get back onto Maine Street traveling north. The plan provides much safer crossings for pedestrians, with a yield from Bath Road onto the no name road, the high-crash count Cleaveland Street extension is closed, there are adequate spaces for merging lanes, and only one direction of traffic to focus on.

Mat and Don Gerrish presented the concept plan to the Long Range Planning Committee of First Parish Church before the MSSOC meeting. Margo Knight also attended the meeting. The church is still concerned with their pedestrian crossing between their properties, but they will share this with their congregation and go through the process as well.

Other aspects of the plan covered were:

- The shaded areas are minor berms, about two inches high, which funnel cars, but allow for the trucks to make the corners.
- All these changes will happen in the existing right of way. There will be no changes to Noble Street, referring to a previous plan with a four-way intersection created by bringing Noble Street to Maine with a T-extension.
- A light at McKeen is not a project issue but it is an existing failing intersection, so it needs to be fixed anyway.
- Bowdoin, First Parish and JHR architects are all talking.

Marji Greenhut asked that the website should be more aggressively updated with minutes and other information on the project.

Future meetings of the Planning Board Process:

- 4/15- 10:30am- Staff review of the traffic study
- 4/23- 7:15pm- Planning Board workshop of the traffic study- televised
- 5/6- Submittal of the final plan to the Planning Board due
- 5/13- 10:30am- Staff review of the final plan
- 5/28 7:15pm- Final plan review

Sarah Brayman asked whether the Planning Board workshop meeting on the traffic study could be postponed because it fell during school vacation week and she felt that the timing would prevent many citizens from speaking at or attending the meeting. Other attendees agreed and asked that it be delayed. Mike Lyne said that moving the meeting to May would cause a delay to the whole project. Anna Breinich said that she would contact the Planning Board to see if they would agree to meet a week later on April 28.

Next meeting: May 1, 2008, 5PM, Municipal Meeting Facility.