

**TOWN OF SPRINGFIELD
SELECTBOARD HALL – 96 MAIN STREET – THIRD FLOOR
PUBLIC HEARING – NORTHERN GATEWAY PROJECT
MONDAY, 11/27/2023**

APPROVED MINUTES

A. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Chair, Kristi Morris, called the meeting to order at 6:02 pm.

Selectboard Members: Chair Kristi Morris, Vice Chair Michael Martin, Everett Hammond, and Walter Martone were present in-person.

Administration: Town Manager Jeff Mobus, Town Clerk Barbara Courchesne, Fire Chief Paul Stagner, Deputy Fire Chief John Claflin, and Public Works Director Jeff Strong were present in-person. Operations Supervisor Don Turner and Library Director Sue Dowdell joined via Zoom.

Budget Advisory Committee (BAC) Members: Doug Johnston, Heather Frahm, Scott Richardson, and John Bond were present in-person. Jim Fog, Tara Chase, and Tre Ayer were present via Zoom.

School Board Liaison: Steve Karaffa was not in attendance

B. NORTHERN GATEWAY PROJECT

The purpose of the public hearing is to receive and discuss the alternatives report from the engineer for the proposed Northern Gateway Project.

Town Manager Jeff Mobus discussed that as a part of the Main Street Master Plan, the Town has hired Stantec to perform a scoping study of the alternatives for a shared use pedestrian bike path along River Street. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added that the engineers have prepared three alternatives to present and public input is encouraged.

Israel Maynard, Project Engineer (PE) Stantec presented a PowerPoint to the Board and participants of the meeting. Israel Maynard, (PE) Stantec discussed the scoping area being along the Black River from the parking lot after the Handley building to the intersection between the Mobile gas station and the Plaza. Israel Maynard, (PE) Stantec described the study tasks and timeline, added that most of the tasks have already been completed. Israel Maynard, (PE) Stantec further added that after this public hearing they would update the report based on anything brought up, finalize it, and submit it to the Town.

Israel Maynard, (PE) Stantec discussed that at the February 13, 2023, Selectboard meeting they gathered local concerns regarding this project such as cyclist and pedestrian safety, aesthetic entrance to downtown (gateway), retaining wall impact, and funding for the project. Israel Maynard, (PE) Stantec noted that a separate scoping study was done on the retaining wall with future recommendations, so it was not included in this project. Chair Kristi Morris requested clarification regarding the location of the retaining wall effected. Israel Maynard, (PE) Stantec described there are existing retaining walls on both sides of the project, one being the newer retaining wall supporting Fellows Hill and the river side there are significantly older retaining walls that have signs of their age.

Israel Maynard, (PE) Stantec discussed the existing conditions of the project area as: speed limit 25 mph; ROW width – 49.5 feet typically; limited environmental resources; underground sewer, water, and gas; aerial electric and communications; 13,142 vehicles per day (2022); 12' lanes, 6' shoulders; existing sidewalks on both sides; on shoulder bike lanes; and the study area was a high crash segment 242 (2010-2014). Israel Maynard, (PE) Stantec added that traffic calming in this area would likely be beneficial to reduce the crashes. Israel Maynard, (PE) Stantec further added that the purpose of this study is to construct improvements that increase the safety and mobility of pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users along this corridor regardless of age and ability, and to encourage the use of non-motorized modes of transportation. Israel Maynard, (PE) Stantec noted that this area already has bicycle facilities on-road,

and most people especially younger or less experienced bicyclists are not comfortable cycling on the road.

Israel Maynard, (PE) Stantec discussed the land-uses in this area provide some significant origin and destination opportunities, noting the Central Business district to the south/east, general business district to the North/west, and medium density residential on the North side. Israel Maynard, (PE) Stantec added that experienced bicyclists will utilize the shoulders, but the shoulders are not adequate for younger or inexperienced bicyclists. Israel Maynard, (PE) Stantec further added that the wide pavement section promotes high vehicle speeds, noting the 2012 Southern Windsor County Regional Planning Commission noted there were pedestrian crossing in the wide and straight roadway which promotes escalated vehicle speeds, and they recommended a gateway treatment to slowdown southbound traffic along river street before entering the heart of downtown. Israel Maynard, (PE) Stantec noted that the 2017 Main Street Master Plan had a priority of putting pedestrians first and a project like this would promote that.

Israel Maynard, (PE) Stantec discussed alternative one as keeping construction as limited as possible. Israel Maynard, (PE) Stantec added that the area to the North they would want to reduce the lane width to 11' from 12' with buffered bike lanes. Israel Maynard, (PE) Stantec continued that the double stripes have a traffic calming effect as they give the illusion of a narrower roadway. Israel Maynard, (PE) Stantec further added the sidewalks would stay on both sides of the road for the north section. Israel Maynard, (PE) Stantec further discussed on the south section they would do a buffered bike lane for the northbound traffic and the southbound would have an off-street 10' shared use path. Israel Maynard, (PE) Stantec noted that the shared use path would begin at the Great Hall and create the riverwalk with formalized parking which would create some green space as well and reduced pedestrian crosswalk lengths.

Israel Maynard, (PE) Stantec discussed alternative two as a shared use path adjacent to the street in the south with off-road parking, noting that this alternative creates a more direct bicycle and pedestrian route but moves the path away from the river through the parking. Israel Maynard, (PE) Stantec

continued that generally everything else is the same, they are keeping the northbound bike lane. Israel Maynard, (PE) Stantec added that this alternative brings the curb in for the northern segment, adds a small green strip, and creates a 10' shared use path for the entire length of the study area. Israel Maynard, (PE) Stantec noted that moving the curb lines in, you have to move all of the drainage inlets in as well. Israel Maynard, (PE) Stantec further added that the parking lot would have its own lane with diagonal parking. Israel Maynard, (PE) Stantec further noted that this alternative also provides some added greenspace.

Israel Maynard, (PE) Stantec discussed alternative three as narrowing the road the most, which creates a situation with shared lanes. Israel Maynard, (PE) Stantec noted that shared lanes at 25 mph speed limit is doable, so really experienced bicyclists would be riding in the lane with the traffic. Israel Maynard, (PE) Stantec continued that this alternative provides additional green space. Israel Maynard, (PE) Stantec added that the southern portion would have angled parking with parking isle, but the shared use path would be along the river. Israel Maynard, (PE) Stantec noted there would also need to be catch basin and drain inlet relocations along the road to accommodate the move of the curb.

Israel Maynard, (PE) Stantec discussed that alternative 1 they are estimating project costs for all-in would around \$900,000, noting the figures are very conservative at this level and for comparison only. Israel Maynard, (PE) Stantec continued that for the purpose and needs it does not achieve the shared use path along the river walk but supports goals for active mobility. Israel Maynard, (PE) Stantec added that this alternative would be expected to have minimal impact to traffic operations as the lane configurations would be the same with minor improvements to safety.

Israel Maynard, (PE) Stantec discussed that alternative 2 the shared use path for the entire length of the project, they are achieving a partial riverwalk. Israel Maynard, (PE) Stantec continued there would be no impacts to traffic and a safety improvement. Israel Maynard, (PE) Stantec added there would be inlet relocations needed and the added greenspace is expected to reduce peak flow

and volume of stormwater. Israel Maynard, (PE) Stantec noted the estimated project cost of \$1,500,000.

Israel Maynard, (PE) Stantec discussed alternative 3 is about the same cost as alternative 2 with a little bit more greenspace. Israel Maynard, (PE) Stantec continued that this alternative achieves all of the goals of the purpose and needs and has the same impacts of alternative 2.

Further discussion ensued that there were multiple goals for the study for commuting and for scenic outdoor recreation. Additional discussion ensued that the 10' shared use path would be for bicyclists and pedestrians, with higher speed bicyclists staying on the road. Heather Frahm inquired about the potential for accidents with bicyclists and pedestrians. Israel Maynard, (PE) Stantec discussed that a cycle track would be a designated area for the bicyclists, and this option is typically done in areas that have high bicyclist and pedestrian counts, but it was not considered for this study. Israel Maynard, (PE) Stantec noted that they would explore that further and include it in the report.

Further discussion ensued that there were not currently areas in Town with high bicyclist and pedestrian accidents. Additional discussion ensued that alternative 2 has the least potential amount of conflict of walkers and bicyclists.

Doug Johnston inquired if there was a crosswalk at the Handley building or if traffic studies had been done there, noting concerns regarding it being on a slight hill. Israel Maynard, (PE) Stantec confirmed the crosswalk just north of the Handley building, noting he could look into the crash data for that area to see if there is some correspondence.

Scott Richardson inquired if the Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) would require a buffer from the river along the construction area. Israel Maynard, (PE) Stantec responded that generally the river buffer requirement when areas are not already developed, this is a retaining wall right to the river, so the river corridor buffers get relaxed because there is not a reasonable alternative. Israel Maynard, (PE) Stantec continued that he does not expect any ANR issues with development of this location, but they would be asked for input when doing the design.

John Bond commented that this will create more green space and he inquired if the maintenance costs for these new areas had been considered in this project. Israel Maynard, (PE) Stantec responded that is always a consideration with these types of projects when adding greenspaces, additional maintenance does have to happen, noting the report will have a section dedicated to the concerns for that. Israel Maynard, (PE) Stantec commented that there are some benefits to the additional greenspace, such as snow storage and reduced paving costs.

Chair Kristi Morris noted concerns about left turning traffic coming from the plaza, to go up Fellows Hill during school hours. Israel Maynard, (PE) Stantec responded that they would look into that and had already considered a transit (bus) stop in that area and had widened that section a bit to give the bus a chance to get off the road. Chair Kristi Morris inquired if the road was wide enough to accommodate emergency vehicles during busy times. Israel Maynard, (PE) Stantec responded that does become a challenge when roadways are narrowed with curbed roadways. Israel Maynard, (PE) Stantec continued that alternative 3 is the narrowest alternative of 13.5', which is what VTrans requires for plowing. Israel Maynard, (PE) Stantec added that they will have to add that to the considerations.

Further discussion ensued that the PDF of the PowerPoint presentation would be made available on the Town's website.

No further discussion. The Public Hearing was closed at 6:53 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Carrie M. Kellow, Recording Secretary