

MUNICIPAL PARKING LOT IMPROVEMENT PROJECT  
PROJECT

INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION

Newington Economic Development Commission  
and  
Downtown Revitalization Committee

January 15, 2009  
7:00 P.M.  
Conference Room C&B

Economic Development Commission Members Present

Chairman P. Joseph Harpie  
Commissioner Val Ginn  
Commissioner Michael Longo  
Commissioner David Marsden  
Commissioner Mark Pappa  
Commissioner Gregory Polk  
Commissioner Thomas Shields

Downtown Revitalization Committee Members Present

Chairman P. Joseph Harpie  
Council Member Christopher Banach  
Council Member John Battalico  
Council Member Michael Lenares

Also present,

Town Attorney Ben Ancona  
Town Planner, Edmund Meehan

INTRODUCTION P. JOSEPH HARPIE

Chairman P. Joseph Harpie welcomed all members present including the audience and introduced Ed Meehan, Town Planner to give a project overview.

PROJECT OVERVIEW - Ed Meehan, Town Planner

Mr. Meehan began by informing everyone that this project is over a half a century old. The original parcel that was donated to the Town of Newington goes back to 1950, over a 2 acre parcel that was donated by the Goodale and Hanbury families. Since then there has been an effort by councils and administrations to put these pieces together. There is an aggregation of 18 parcels in a 4.5/ acre area that have been donated or traded off in the last 50 plus years to make this parking lot what it is today. It has sat dormant for much of that time. In the late 1970's the Newington Development Commission went out and obtained a planning consultant who did a market study and a conceptual design for the center which was endorsed by the Economic Development Commission and Town Council back then and also the Town Planning and Zoning Commission endorsed this project. In the early 1980's this project was embraced by the Town Planning and Zoning Commission when the zoning regulations were amended and land owners were encouraged to donate land. With this accomplishment, the town agreed to the maintenance.

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snowplowing and landscaping. In the early 1990's several pieces of property came together on the western side of the parking lot and interim drainage work was accomplished. The easterly side of the parking lot was paved and a portion of the westerly part of the lot was done. Since approximately 1992 there has been no real physical improvement of the municipal parking lot other than occasional upgraded lighting, most of the lot on the westerly side is in a binder situation and the drainage not completely connected. This is the time to get it done because we have the opportunity to finish what we started in 1950 and as Mr. Harpie stated, this is what it is all about. Now I will turn this part of the program over to Dennis Goderre and Dereck Cole of the BL Companies and they will take you through a thorough power point presentation.

### PRESENTATION MUNICIPAL PARKING LOT IMPROVEMENTS CONCEPT PLAN DENNIS GODERRE AND DERECK KOHL BL COMPANIES PROJECT CONSULTANTS

Mr. Kohl said they were certainly excited to work on this project with the town and town staff who was followed by Mr. Goderre who thanked everyone for attending this meeting and commended the town of Newington for having this urban environment in the Town center that most communities are trying to create from scratch. The underlying goal of this project is to create a pedestrian oriented parking lot in a cohesive, unified environment, focusing mainly on Market Square and the newly developed street scape on Main Street which leads to the parking lot. The entrances from Constance Leigh Drive and Market Square are the two main entrances with a heavy volume of vehicles which creates pedestrian conflicts as well which we are trying to reduce with more efficient parking. We also wish to address the future growth of this area. We will also be looking to improve the signage and create better directories in proper locations and that all main entrances have clear, defined signage that identifies public parking areas.

What Mr. Goderre also pointed to were the long straight road stretches that were observed to have high traffic speeds and the intent is to slow down this traffic and by also using pavement areas coming into the parking lot from Constance Leigh Drive, trying to narrow it down. Parking will be focused on the town owned parcel with the Market Square entrance into a squared area, with textured pavements and cross walks for pedestrians and a new town green with a sheltered gazebo. From the entry point of Market Square you could turn right or left with the entrance from Main Street being one way only. There would be a perimeter walkway to access all of the businesses and traffic could circulate or go back. The Constance Leigh entrance would still remain a two way driveway. The two entrances from East Cedar Street would remain one way only with parallel parking where you could park and circulate through the businesses. Enhancing the pedestrian connections to Main Street would be through an ally that is currently owned by the Town with superior lighting and pavements cohesive with those along Main Street. Several excellent aerial views were presented. Commissioner Polk raised the question of the gazebo being on a raised platform, in a stage-like construction which is a goal of the Downtown Business Association so that the community could be entertained. Councilor John Battalico queried if there would be difficulty getting a truck in the area, especially fire trucks. Chairman Harpie replied that the Fire Department has been contacted. Commissioner Pappa also noted that they have implemented the measurements into the design software to insure that before they take it into a trial run.

Other aerial views show texture changes in the roadways to let drivers know to slow down and green areas where people can gather. There would be period lighting, similar to the Main Street lighting with banners in strategic locations and benches and flowers; shade trees, directional signage and kiosks in strategic locations. Councilor John Battalico questioned what the results will be without the purchase of other properties and they are not built into this Phase I.

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Chairman Harpie replied that this is the main plan without any town property acquisitions of private property. Deputy Mayor Lenares questioned whether there are a sufficient number of parking spaces for this area. Town Planner Ed Meehan replied that for the present land uses around the parking lot that abut unacquired property, it is still moving and evolving as we go forward with this concept and the committee needs to go to the next phase, with a lot of work to be done under the ground, and around the perimeter and will hang on these bones, so to speak. Deputy Mayor Lenares questioned shrinking the width of the driveway entrance from Constance Leigh Drive and still leaving the shade trees and the one way entrance way from East Cedar Street and the south "square boxes" green space, all new and reconfigured with a three way stop sign as they drive in. When Councilor John Battalico questioned the "number" value of this project, Chairman Harpie replied that with Phase One they are collecting numbers now with the present economy and that they have a million dollars to work with, authorized by the Town Council. To the extent that the million dollars would be deficient in completing Phase I, we would come back with the architects, take another look at it and communicate to all the members and the public and the businesses in that center as to where we are and would be reported to the Town Council with direction from them as to how much above that money, if at all they are looking to proceed. Not to mislead anybody, this committee is only authorized to work on the center improvement which is the Urban Action Grant. Councilor John Battalico questioned the assessment of the current standing with the Bonelli property. Town Planner Ed Meehan replied that they are currently working on the appraisals and this would be an improper time to share that information.

Councilor Christopher Banach questioned the dimensions of the town green which is approximately 150'x120' for the purpose of having a group of people there for a gathering, as to how many people exactly could gather there. Commissioner Longo questioned when going to the engineering stage of the drainage, does this concept coincide with that issue? Mr. Goderre explained that there was an underground retention area and that they are looking at it with Town Planner Ed Meehan agreeing that an area does get backed up after a heavy rain storm. Commissioner Marsden stated that in the entranceway from Market Square in order to get to the businesses off of the left lane might be a problem and that speed bumps would slow down traffic, especially for older people.

Chairman Harpie stated that since Mayor MaryEllen Anderson, every mayor from one degree to another and every council from one degree to another has made an effort to improve the center of Town, either by how people have donated property like Walter and his wife and others, all small steps to increase the parking. These are tough economic times and we are very fortunate to have a million dollar investment that can be put into this and I appreciate all of your constructive comments. The architects are working to make this project esthetically beautiful and functionally workable for all of us so having said that, I will now open up the meeting to public participation.

### IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND COMMENTS.

Forest Doyle: My name is Forest Doyle, my wife and I own the property on 64 Market Square. If you go away with Phase I, where the green is, you are actually going to remove parking that exists today that serves the properties on Steve's and our property and the building next to ours so for the people on the west side there is going to be a net reduction of open parking. When does Phase II happen? If that happens promptly after Phase I it is not a significant issue, but it appears that if you are banking on other property owners deeding land to the town, Phase II may take another 60 years or so. Is there a time line for Phase 2?

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Mr. Meehan stated Phase 2 is the 25,000 SF known as the Bonelli property.

Forest Doyle: I thought it was the other gray area behind Market Square also.

Mr. Meehan stated that was private property of the master plan going back to the 80's and would come into the municipal parking lot if the owners decided to develop their parcels. You have parking credits as do other owners who have donated land but for Phase 2 we are talking about the shady area to the left of the greens and that has a fair number of parking spaces in it. The committee has authorized appraisals and that process is underway now.

Forest Doyle: The issue of concern to me is that a lot of the customers of the Karate school park in the area where the green is now, so our business and presumably Steve's and the businesses on the other side of us will have a net loss of readily accessible parking to our businesses.

Bruce Mortenson: I am a tenant in Jay Amarus's building in Market Square. The first question I had under the current plan is that they can exit out from that street from the bank. It looks like a lot of ways to get in but getting out, you want to reduce the dimension that's Constance Leigh, if you ever left the parking lot and get on to Constance Leigh and take a left to get to Cedar it is very difficult as it is. If you are only one lane getting out, you are going to have a lot of traffic back up there to try and turn left. Is there going to be one or two lanes getting out, so that you can go left and right? For someone exiting on Constance Leigh, one car blocks everybody behind him and if you are trying to turn right and there is a car in front of you, you are there for a while. Also, on Phase 2 it looks like you are going to make an exit only coming from the bank onto Market Square where at ours on #50, you were coming in only and the bank was going to be an out only. By making it out only obviously you take care of the people turning in left there, and a sign could do that "no left turn" also, but the other problem is the bank is pretty busy and that is probably going to be the main exit for the people getting out of there and try coming out of there with four or five cars backed up trying to exit there and taking a right hand turn you are completely backed up with I think only 1 or 2 cars that could possibly fit in front of that at the stop light. It is going to be difficult for those people to exit only out of that at this point now.

Joe Motta: My name is Joe Motta and I own property on Main Street and the problem that I have is that in Phase 2 and that is not going to happen any time soon, parking is really going to be limited in the area where that building is, I am thinking that if that green instead of being on the left is shifted to the right side, we don't know if Phase 2 is going to happen any time soon, that would provide for more parking. I notice a lot of people parking there, have 6-7 tenants in front of the building, parking in the back and 3, 7 to 8 cars parking on that side, so all of that parking will be taken, you know, we just opened up a new business and parking would really be limited in that area, that was one of my concerns. The other is the dumpster, is that going to be in the same spot? Any way of moving it? That would allow for 2 or 3 more parking spots. It's too close to the businesses and it really stinks smells, a lot quite a bit, especially in the summer time. Move it 15 to 20 feet over.

Ninel Shelrova: I own a business on 190 Market Square. My question is I am on the right in the corner and first we have no sign, no one knows where our business is when they come through this way and when they go all the way from Market Square they cannot find us. I am interested in what kind of sign can be put on each corner.

Mr. Goderre replied that property is not owned by the town but as far as people finding her business is that of a kiosk with a directory and map of the area will be available. Mr. Meehan explained that the grant the town received is limited to the inside perimeter of the 4-1/2 acre

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but to do something outside of Market Square is not within the purview of this grant. Chairman Harpie added that there are members of the Economic Development Commission who are working with the center and Chamber of Commerce and you could take your concerns to the Chamber of Commerce where you can bring those issues up and work with you on that issue.

Al Mennochio: 261 Audobon Avenue. I have a business in town and heard about spending a million dollars on this project but again have not heard of the cost of maintenance who is going to pay for it, and how easy is it going to be to plow and clean up because it does look like a maze and how many accidents will this maze cost. I am glad that home owners are here tonight to talk about "I want" and we are spending a million dollars of tax payer's money on this project but I have not heard anyone say where is the money coming from to maintain this property. Do you have an idea of the cost of maintaining this property? Where does the maintenance dollars come from? So we are talking about spending tax dollars to maintain this. This piece of property mainly functions for a selective amount of business owners or property owners, period. I heard somebody say we had a heavy volume of traffic in this area, which means heavy profits. If we have a selective amount of property owners that are donating their property to this cause, avoiding taxes, avoiding their maintenance and if I donate a piece of property and the town owns it, it alleviates me a peck. Why is it I don't hear of forming an association and charging these people an association fee to do the maintenance, after we spend the million dollars. If we are talking about greens in other locations of town that serves all the people of town and not a select group of business people, as I say, I own a business in town, I would like to donate my parking lot to the town of Newington and have them come in and paint it, plow it, clean it, plant flowers around it, just so my business looks beautiful and I am sure there are businesses up on the Berlin Turnpike that would like to donate their parking lots to the town of Newington, but that is not fair. We are talking about being very selective here, okay, and not really caring about all of the tax payers of Newington. We talked about the dumpster. Who pays for the dumpster? Thank you and I hope you take into consideration about forming an association and charging the cost of maintaining this property to the property owners and the business owners to alleviate the tax payers for picking up the tab for them to make a profit and as I said, heavy volume, heavy profits. Thank you.

Lena Laverro: We do not live in Newington but are in the process of negotiating to buy a business in the Market Square area. We are holding back because I understand your pedestrian situation but our main concern is that customers want to know a way to get into a business and get out of the business. At the moment I think it is a maze unless there are signs at each area that you enter, like arrows like the evergreen walk, this store is this way, this store is that way, but if you do not have signs, you really can't find where you are going. We are holding back on that point in trying to negotiate the business with the owner. How long does it take with Phase I to get construction going? Also, the Bonelli property with the second phase how will that work out? Thank you.

Michael Gallon: I live at 43 Cheney Lane, Newington. I am a member of the downtown business association and also have spent the last 25 years of my life in the commercial real estate business and have been involved in the master planning for Somerset Square in Glastonbury. Corporate Ridge in Rocky Hill, etc. I would like to thank Joe Harpie and the Downtown Redevelopment Commission and Economic Development Commission and Downtown Business Association for the work and vision and the BL companies who has put forth the groundwork for a master plan that will change the scope of our down town. We have an opportunity in the town of Newington to completely look at how the future of this area is going to be, the initial pieces that will be with this town for the next 25, 50, 75 years. I believe the plan as shown here creates linkage and access

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to all of the businesses and with the streetscape the amenities to get people from all of that parking to access those businesses and will promote redevelopment of this entire area and offer the opportunity more than a municipal parking lot, and creating an environment for people to gather and meander around the square. I applaud everything that is going on and hope it continues strong into the future. Thank you.

Bob Seiler: Bob Seiler from Flagler Street in Newington. My only question is if Phase 2 goes the way of this project has gone over the years and does not happen over a long time and we put that green in there, are we losing parking? It would appear that we are going to lose a dramatic number of spaces. Ed Meehan replies that losing some space would not be dramatic and the spaces may be further away and for people who work and park their cars 8 hours a day are not going to be able to park right next to their businesses, but will park a little bit further away and let the customer park closer to the businesses.

Burt Stanko: I manage 142 Market Square and commend the town for considering the planning vision and change is never easy. The goal here is to attract pedestrian traffic and it is not obvious of a connection with the green and any walkways and traffic patterns look almost circled by cars all the time, not conducive for people to come and walk on to the green. There is also a street on Market Square that is not connected that you could have another driveway there. (private driveway for emergency access) My key points were about the green, making sure the walkways were there and for the traffic pattern.

Zack Shore: 1425 Willard Avenue. Resident and in soft ware and business process consultant and one of the questions I have is how are you looking at measuring the improvement that comes out of this project. I commend the group for tackling this project and what about increased customer flow and tax revenues or is it just improvement of business owners. One of the questions early on was the question about the band stand and it would be interesting as to how that could be used as a shell on the Charles River in Boston on summer evenings who come down town and use the businesses. Commissioner Polk replied that the Downtown Business Association discussed that subject recently about bands, entertainment and bring in a draw of not only a parking lot.

Rose Lyons: 46 Elton Drive. I am looking at this plan and thinks it is fantastic and I have been in town over 60 years and go back to the days when the center of town was a hub, and walk to the drug store and then it became the Berlin Turnpike with the decline of Market Square over the past 23 years. I agree with Mr. Mortensen's traffic pattern. Just recently I went down the driveway between Steve's and the office building and is that area wide enough for sidewalks on either side and two cars? When is the projected date and end date? Start construction late winter, early spring and completion late October/November, 2010./ The entrance to Mk. Sq. is that town property? Yes, it is. I called about pot holes and try to maintain what we have right now, and also the sidewalks around Patz's riding school and the Thrift store, the sidewalks seem to be deteriorating. It's dangerous in there when the Kiwanis has its flea market in the summer time. I hope there will be a police presence at that time because it seems to get congested with kids hanging out in the center of town, and that was one of my concerns. This is fantastic, thumbs up, great job.

Chairman Harpie commended and thanked everyone who participated and asked that residents look to the Town Web Site to make comments. Ed Meehan encouraged residents to gain access to the Q send on the web page, resident comments through the web master from the Town Planner's office which is [www.newingtonct.gov](http://www.newingtonct.gov). You can also call 860-665-8575 and the plans are available for public review in my office. Chairman Harpie stated that he wanted this project

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to work economically, safely and make it functional and that is our goal and that is why we have other meetings scheduled. We also appreciate all of your comments. This information is important to all of us. The next public information date is February 9, 2009 and the one after that March 9, 2009. In between those dates BL has quite an aggressive work schedule to take these concept plans and put them into hard scape drawings and work with the town staff and with referrals to the Fire Department and Public Works and Parks and Recreation as well as myself and the Town Engineer. This will also have to go to the Town Planning and Zoning Commission and in early March it has to get before the Town Council for their input for cost estimates for the budgetary point of view. That takes us through the end of March.

V. REMARKS BY COMMISSIONERS

Deputy Mayor Lenares asked Town planner Ed Meehan as to how much frontage do they own on this plan, the sidewalk or just the front of the building? That goes for the same thing on Main Street, who owns the entire part of the Main Street? Ed Meehan stated that they own the property, but they are all basic frontage lots that met the zoning when they were developed. In the initial parking lot they have two frontages, and the property owners that donated land they have the street frontage and then the public side of the public parking lot side, that would be like Mrs. Eddy's property and the Gualteri property. Joe Motta, the Rosenblatts and the property where the Bike Shop and Carvel's is located..

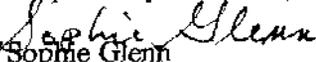
Councilor Battalico had a question regarding the electrical engineering. Ed Meehan responded that they would retain an electrical contractor to work with BL in laying out the circuit and when needed, for the electrical power to serve the lighting system and the dumpster. When it comes to a lighting plan we will work with BL to locate lights and the style of lights and this all depends on the budget and we would like to try and get underground. When we are digging everything up now is the time to get it underground.

Town Council member Christopher Banach inquired as to the consideration for holiday lighting? Commissioner Val Ginn just talked to the Town Manager about that subject and it's all about the budget, including piped music.

Chairman Harpie thanked everyone for their attendance and encouraged public participation at the town of Newington's web site.

Commissioner Marsden made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Papa seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting concluded at 8:25 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

  
Sophie Glenn  
Recording Secretary

PLEASE NOTE: Tape recordings of this meeting are available for public review and they are on file in the Newington Town Clerk's office. (2 tapes)