

Worcester Planning Commission
MINUTES
May 23rd, 2023

Housekeeping/Public Comments/Agenda revisions

Chani called the meeting to order at 5:36 p.m. and welcomed the group with a roundtable share of favorite memories of the Worcester village center, in honor of the Village Center Designation.

Bill moved to approve minutes of April 25th meeting. Will seconded. No discussion. All in favor.

Updates

Village Center Designation

Will reported on the review and approval of the Village Center designation that took place yesterday. RPC recommended approval and presented the case. There was a question about the number of residential parcels within the boundary, which is due to the nature of small towns which typically have a high % of residential properties in village centers. There was also a question about whether Worcester might consider seeking an historic district designation for the same boundary. Downtown Development Board voted to approve the designation. Official paperwork coming soon.

Benefits are access to tax breaks for property improvements, and access to grant funding.

Next steps

- Will will draft a letter to notify businesses, multi-family dwellings, recreation committee, school, church, and other interested parties about new designation and where they can get more information about tax benefits and state grant opportunities.
- Chani will notify Selectboard and ask them to send out the letter.
- Will will research historic district designation and report back at next meeting.

Bicycle & Pedestrian Grant Program

Chani reported that she decided not to pursue an application in this round of funding. She attended a webinar and consulted with Keith at RPC. Purpose of a scoping grant is to surface and explore options and Worcester could submit an application without knowing what we might want to do. Barrier is the required match funding. Grants are typically \$40-60K with a 25% match, preferred as cash. In-kind (donated materials or services) are possible if approved; donated Right of Way can be used as match. Another grant program opens up in the fall : Transportation [Alternatives Grant Program](#) which can also be used for sidewalks / bike or multi-use paths, and also funds scoping studies. Discussion of actions to be more prepared to apply for this type of funding in

the future included conversations with the Middlesex planning commission (eg: a multi-town bike path), as well as with the Worcester Rec committee, Ladd Field Committee & Selectboard, to brainstorm ideas and think about a timeline that would make sense in the context of other activities, and whether there is enough interest to justify seeking match funding. Chani will follow up.

Election of officers

Will moved, and Bill seconded the following slate of officers. All in favor.

Chair (Chani), Vice-chair (Will), Clerk/Secretary (Toni), CVRPC Liaison (Bill).

Discussion items

Energy planning process

Chani reviewed the process for developing an Enhanced Energy Plan, and progress toward forming an Energy Task Force. Avram Patt has agreed to serve on the Task Force and Chani has invited several other Worcester residents to join. She hopes to convene first meeting in June or July, orienting Task Force to its work over the summer, and beginning to build an Enhanced Energy Plan in the fall. Hope would be to finish a plan in about a year and submit for approval. Discussion of next steps included consulting with Middlesex Planning Commission, which recently completed an Enhanced Energy Plan, seeking RPC guidance on best examples / templates, and asking Selectboard guidance in forming Task Force.

Review actions at a glance / draft annual calendar

Chani suggested deferring this item until the next meeting. Will agreed to review Town Plan Actions and propose an annual calendar for “ongoing” actions within Planning Commission regular meetings.

Adjournment

Toni moved to adjourn the meeting and Bill seconded. All in favor. Meeting was adjourned at 6:44 p.m.