

FINAL

**CITY OF LEBANON
WEST LEBANON REVITALIZATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES, November 23, 2021
LEBANON CITY HALL – MEETING ROOM 1
7:00 PM**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chet Clem (Vice-Chair); Gregorio Amaro, Kevin Purcell (Economic Development Commission Rep.); Dean Cashman, Lauren Groves

MEMBERS ABSENT: Jim Winny (Chair, City Council Rep.); Laurel Stavis, Graziella Parati

STAFF PRESENT: David Brooks, Planning & Zoning Director

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** Vice-Chair Clem called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm.

2. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

A. None

3. **OLD BUSINESS:**

A. Committee Recommendations/Priorities

Mr. Brooks discussed the similarities between the goals of the 2016 Downtown Visioning Study and the 2019 West Lebanon Village Visioning Charrette in terms of proposing new zoning regulations. Since the goals of a more active and attractive streetscape are highlighted in both studies, he felt there was some basis for applying the Lebanon Downtown (LD) District regulations to West Lebanon. But it was noted and previously discussed that the LD regulations do not allow for new drive-through facilities. In West Lebanon, there are currently four drive throughs, all of which are banks. Mr. Brooks confirmed that if an existing bank was to relocate, any business that moved into the property would be granted use of the drive through as it is grand-fathered in. Mr. Brooks suggested that drive throughs may be individually successful but may not be ideal for the overall downtown. Architect Dan Winny noted in an email to the Committee that drive-throughs tend to favor national chains and take up an excessive amount of space that can make a downtown unwalkable. Mr. Brooks stated his opinion that another vision study would not be beneficial at this stage. Mr. Clem questioned whether the zoning of Lebanon is ideal for West Lebanon or if it is the wrong fit.

Mr. Brooks noted that there is language to grand-father projects on existing buildings in downtown Lebanon and there would be similar zoning guidelines for West Lebanon. He also pointed out that re-zoning is bound to create non-conformities which is why grandfathering exists. He noted that there is no obligation that the City have a single set of regulations for all of the downtown areas, but he understood that to be the intent of the Committee's motion earlier in the summer. Though West Lebanon will never be downtown Lebanon, the community and boards need to decide what direction they want to go. Mr. Brooks confirmed that re-zoning is a cumbersome process and it likely will not happen at an expedited pace as the Department has many other obligations and priorities at the same time. Discussion continued between Mr. Brooks and Mr. Clem regarding the process of amending zoning and what has inhibited the movement in West Lebanon thus far.

Mr. Clem recognized that one of the differences this time around is the excitement surrounding West Lebanon. There is momentum from the demolition of Westboro and from the block party that has created enthusiasm and support and a willingness/motivation to move forward.

Mr. Brooks stated that the current proposal would result in one set of regulations for the downtowns as opposed to the various adaptive regulations. He suggested that the community could proceed with amendments to dimensional standards for the Central Business (CB) District, but the conversation about uses could happen later after more community discussion. Drive-through uses are one of the few differences between the LD regulations and the CB District regulations, so they would still not be dramatically different. Mr. Amaro said there is a drive-through culture already and questioned if it would give way to a town of nothing but drive-throughs. Mr. Clem strongly urged including property owners in these discussions. Mr. Clem asked if it would hurt the community to remove a potentially helpful tool (drive-thoughts)?

There was discussion about building height regulations in the CB District. Mr. Clem noted that in many communities, there is a push to increase density where it can be accommodated. Building upward has become so vital in recent years with rapid population growth. There was discussion about Form Based Codes being used to streamline the review process by outlining what a community is looking for. Part of the challenge of growing West Lebanon is that there is no style to work off of or work toward.

The committee discussed bifurcating the roundabout from the rest of the streetscape project for financial reasons and until there can be more community discussion. The committee felt the funding would be more beneficial for the greenway. There was discussion on the dry bridge project which may be getting delayed again because of the railroad. At this rate, the hope is that the bridge will be completed in 2023 and 2024.

Ms. Groves asked for numbers to clarify the rate of failure of the roundabout v. a signalized intersection from a traffic study. There was discussion on options specific to the roundabout such as how many lanes it may include and if more lanes are actually beneficial. Mr. Brooks said the traffic numbers are based on background growth and standard assumptions that may or may not align with reality. Those projections show failure at about the same rate if the volume of traffic keeps growing. In terms of moving traffic, the roundabout moves vehicles slightly better than a signal at peak times and in off-peak times. There was also discussion on how traffic circles are challenging to build because an entire intersection cannot be shut down for construction; traffic has to continue moving.

The committee continued discussion on the benefits and drawbacks of splitting the streetscape and roundabout into separate projects. The general consensus of the committee was to bifurcate them.

There was discussion on spacing on the road/sidewalks. Many businesses are concerned about parking so the committee discussed where additional parking could be implemented. The concept of additional parking behind the buildings on the east side of Main Street quickly got lost in details that were not yet determined. There is still an opportunity to construct additional off-street parking to replace up to 11 on-street spaces and the additional room within Main Street could be used for more streetscape improvements. Mr. Clem suggested parking arrangements between businesses and property owners because there is currently an abundance of unused space. Mr. Brooks noted that there must be agreement among business owners because the city cannot force parking arrangements on any business.

Mr. Brooks screen-shared the Google Doc draft of the committee's recommendations and the group discussed the proposed topics. The document was sub-titled "Top 10 Priorities". Mr. Clem suggested that from then until the next meeting, people could chime in, make comments, and propose changes within the document.

Mr. Clem opened the last ten minutes to questions from folks in virtual attendance. While there were no questions, there were some commendations for what the committee is doing as a whole.

4. NEW BUSINESS:

No discussion.

5. OTHER BUSINESS:

No discussion.

6. ADJOURNMENT:

A MOTION by Dean Cashman to adjourn the meeting.

Seconded by Kevin Purcell.

****The Motion was approved (5-0)***

The meeting was adjourned at 8:52 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Megan Mraz