

FINAL

**CITY OF LEBANON  
WEST LEBANON REVITALIZATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
MINUTES, DECEMBER 15, 2020  
REMOTE VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS  
LebanonNH.gov/Live  
5:30PM**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Jim Winny (Chair, City Council Rep.); Graziella Parati; Lauren Groves; Gregorio Amaro; Chet Clem (Vice Chair); Chris Lin; Dean Cashman; Laurel Stavis (Planning Board Rep.); Kevin Purcell (Economic Development Commission Rep.)

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** None

**STAFF PRESENT:** David Brooks, Planning & Zoning Director; Shaun Mulholland, City Manager; Paula Maville, Deputy City Manager

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**1. CALL TO ORDER:** Chair Winny called the meeting to order at 5:33pm

A. Review of meeting procedures and NH RSA 91-A "Right-to-Know" requirements.

Mr. Brooks shared the State directive and participation details for the online meeting in Microsoft Teams. All speakers identified themselves.

**2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

A. None

**3. NEW BUSINESS:**

A. Discussion meeting frequency and regular meeting day/time

Chair Winny asked for input on how frequently the committee should meet and what day and time would work best. Ms. Stavis suggested that the committee consider meeting more than once per month since it will sunset at the end of 2021. Ms. Parati asked for clarification on the purpose of the committee. Chair Winny reviewed some of the goals for the committee. Other members agreed with bi-monthly meetings to start and re-evaluating as needed through the year.

The committee agreed to meet on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays at 5:30pm starting in January and that meeting days, times, and frequency can change as the committee moves forward.

B. Summarize 2019 West Lebanon Village Charrette and 2020 Summary Report

Mr. Brooks provided an overview of the October 2019 charrette process and results. He described the different events held during the 2-day charrette, the online survey, and reviewed some of the specific ideas and proposals generated during the process.

Mr. Mulholland provided an update on Westboro Yard and the City's interactions with the State. He noted that the City originally proposed to acquire a portion of Westboro Yard, but that was changed to a long-term lease request after the existing buildings have been removed from the property. The City does not want to take on liability associated with contamination on site. He stated that discussions about the long-term lease request are currently on hold. He noted that the legislature included funding in the current budget for demolition of the buildings, but those funds

have not been released due to the pandemic. If those funds are not able to be spent, they would be lost when a new budget is approved. The City will continue to work with its legislative representatives to advocate on behalf of the City regarding Westboro Yard.

Mr. Mulholland described the work to be completed by the state to demolish existing dilapidated buildings. The City would provide an in-kind contribution by accepting demolition debris from the project. He noted that asbestos and other hazardous building materials would be abated prior to demolition, but clean-up would not involve the removal of contaminated soils on the property.

Mr. Lin asked if existing petroleum contamination would inhibit redevelopment of the property. Mr. Mulholland clarified that the state would have to approve any new building on the property, and no such proposals are currently envisioned in the proposed lease agreement. Potential costs to develop the property have not been studied and complete remediation would be extremely costly and time-consuming, so natural attenuation of the contaminated soils is anticipated.

Chair Winny noted that the City has thus far considered park use or open space due to potential costs. Mr. Clem asked for a copy of the proposed lease agreement. Mr. Mulholland will provide the documents to the committee. Ms. Stavis mentioned the recent drone video footage. Mr. Mulholland described the intent of drone video footage to help illustrate the current state of the property in order to influence decision-makers.

Ms. Parati noted that Main Street would be easier to improve and asked if there are already funds available for projects. Chair Winny noted that the City owns very little land along Main Street, so private development is going to be necessary to make improvements. Mr. Mulholland noted that some money exists for preliminary engineering for a Streetscape Study, but there are no additional funds proposed in the current capital improvement program.

Ms. Parati asked about the former Dunkin Donuts site and whether the City can dictate what happens on private property. Mr. Mulholland noted that the City has limited options for development incentives. Mr. Brooks described the City's 79-E community revitalization tax incentive program. Mr. Brooks also noted that the City can control zoning and development regulations, but individual owners control the types of uses they allow on their properties.

Mr. Lin noted that as the vision for West Lebanon starts to come to fruition, property owners will catch on and they have more capital to make further improvements. He noted that creating an improved vibe will help attract similar businesses. Mr. Clem noted that engaging and incentivizing property owners will be a key part of achieving the community's goals for West Lebanon.

Ms. Stavis asked about creating a Tax Increment Finance district for West Lebanon. Chair Winny noted his understanding that the City could consider a TIF district that meets statutory limitations. Mr. Clem noted that TIFs tend to incentivize larger-scale development. Mr. Mulholland expressed concern about potential abuse of TIF districts, the potential impacts to the fiscal position of the City, and whether a TIF district would be beneficial for West Lebanon. Chair Winny noted that an anchor project is often needed and felt that a TIF district should be considered.

Ms. Stavis noted that ownership of the railroad and Rymes propane have changed in recent months. She asked about approaching the new owners partner with the City to improve Westboro and West Lebanon. Chair Winny noted that Rymes' propane tanks are a concern and have impacted redevelopment opportunities. He noted the importance of having the State and its tenants work with the City. Mr. Lin said positive PR could be in the best interest of both companies.

Ms. Stavis asked for a diagram and list of who owns property in West Lebanon. Mr. Amaro noted that what the community wants to see is going to require private property owners to be engaged and on board, so knowing who they are is essential.

Mr. Amaro referenced Bow Market in Union Square in Somerville, MA as a successful, grass-roots, small business cluster development project. They took an abandoned building and turned it into a cultural center with locally-owned businesses. He felt that West Lebanon Village needs a core project for people to really see how things could be improved.

Ms. Parati noted that improved sidewalks could be a powerful tool to spur other improvements and support the businesses on Main Street. People need a reason to go to Main Street and then they become customers for the businesses. Human traffic is at the center of creating community.

Mr. Clem described his experiences with Bow Market and said it is a fantastic example of actionable, incremental improvement.

Mr. Brooks described the status and goals of the Streetscape Study. The Study will focus on Main Street and Bridge Street to produce an overall master concept for the corridor and suggestions for how to break it down into affordable and manageable pieces for implementation by coordinating with individual developments or through capital improvements or grant applications. The Study will be completed during the first half of 2021 and will include some coordination with the committee. It is very expensive to take on corridor improvements as a single project, but it is difficult to execute in a piecemeal fashion without having a master concept. Mr. Lin asked if the City knows the width of the Main Street right-of-way. Mr. Brooks noted that the Study will include a land survey of the corridor to have enough detail to work with and reiterated that the study will take approximately 6-8 months.

Ms. Parati asked whether it would make sense to approach local banks for contributions. Mr. Brooks noted a suggestion from the charrette was to work with the banks along Main Street to create a micro-loan or low-interest revolving loan program for owners to make property improvements that benefit the overall corridor.

Ms. Stavis asked if the City could control how property owners might use such a program. Mr. Brooks noted that the City controls uses and design through zoning and development regulations and indicated that the committee could advocate for appropriate regulatory changes. Ms. Stavis suggested that the committee should get a primer on zoning and what it currently allows and excludes. Chair Winny agreed that would be helpful. He noted that his father, architect Dan Winny, could assist in explaining how planning and urban design can work.

Ms. Stavis also suggested hearing from the Heritage Commission regarding the potential for a historic district, including Dana House, Seminary Hill School, the former West Lebanon library. West Lebanon is the original site of habitation in Lebanon.

Mr. Lin referred to the Main Street area as “Old West Lebanon”. He thought names help create an identity. He noted that he has lived in other places where the people decided what kinds of uses were desired, expressed those desires to property owners, and zoning did not change.

Ms. Maville suggested inviting individual property and business owners to participate in the committee discussions. Mr. Clem noted it’s important to champion success stories that exist in West Lebanon Village. Chair Winny agreed that we need to keep building momentum.

### **C. Review, Discuss, Prioritize Implementation Strategies from Charrette Report**

Chair Winny noted that River Park is not mentioned in the charrette report, but it will have a significant impact on West Lebanon. The City property at 3 Seminary Hill also presents an opportunity, but that Westboro Yard is the most significant issue for the area. Chair Winny noted the City has little or no control of some of the major components of West Lebanon Village. He suggested outreach will be important. Two potential subcommittees could focus on Westboro Yard and on outreach and communicating with stakeholders. Mr. Lin noted that he has lots of questions about Westboro Yard and would appreciate a more focused Q&A session at some point.

Ms. Stavis noted that there is a 350-seat theatre in Seminary Hill School that could be a significant asset for West Lebanon Village and it may be worth communicating with the School Board about potential opportunities. Chair Winny noted that White River Junction has done a great job revitalizing its downtown with the theater and restaurants.

Architect Dan Winny suggested that the issue with West Lebanon Village is about vision and the market. A vision is motivating and defining, but there has to be a market. The private sector will be relied upon as streetscape improvements do not create a market by themselves. What can West Lebanon do to replicate or complement the success of White River Junction? The intersections at the north and south ends of Main Street are opportunities. In some ways traffic may be bad, but it also represents activity and vitality. The committee should talk to commercial real estate brokers to learn more about the potential market for West Lebanon.

Mr. Lin noted that parking would help. West Lebanon's location between other districts brings traffic, but people can't find parking even if they want to stop. Mr. Winny noted that parking problems are a sign of success, it shows there is something going on. Central Business District zoning is liberal and allows a lot of things, but redevelopment still isn't happening. Mr. Clem noted there may be a parking allocation problem, but not necessarily a lack of overall parking. Shared parking agreements could be beneficial without having to build more parking.

Chair Winny summarized some issues for the committee to address early, including Westboro Yard and coordination with business and property owners. Mr. Clem noted the opportunity for trail connectivity. There was discussion about connections to the Mascoma River Greenway, a recent Dartmouth College student study, complications of active rail, and ways to consider even temporary ped/bike connections to West Lebanon. Ms. Stavis asked for aerial images of West Lebanon to see where connections might be possible.

Chair Winny asked members to think about their interests in moving various ideas forward.

#### **4. OTHER BUSINESS:**

A. None

#### **5. ADJOURNMENT:**

***A MOTION by Ms. Stavis to adjourn the meeting.***

***Seconded by Mr. Clem.***

***Roll Call Vote:***

***Members voting in favor included: Chair Winny, Ms. Parati, Ms. Groves, Mr. Amaro, Mr. Clem, Mr. Lin, Mr. Cashman, Ms. Stavis, Mr. Purcell.***

***\*The Motion was approved (9-0)***

The meeting was adjourned at 7:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
David Brooks  
Planning & Zoning Director