



TOWN HALL
4 Boltwood Avenue
Amherst, MA 01002-2351

DESIGN REVIEW BOARD
(413) 259-3040
(413) 259-2410 [Fax]
planning@amherstma.gov

November 24, 2008

DRB Memorandum #2008-14

Memo to: Bonnie Weeks, Building Commissioner
Jonathan Tucker, Planning Director
From: Christine Brestrup, Senior Planner
Subject: DRB Meeting – Pomeroy Village Streetscape Design
November 19, 2008

The Wednesday, November 19, 2008, meeting of the Design Review Board began at 7:35 p.m. in the Second Floor Meeting Room, Town Hall. Members Janet Winston (Chair), Jonathan Salvon and Kathryn Grandonico were present, along with Senior Planner, Christine Brestrup. Also present were Jason Skeels, Town Engineer, Terry Forrest, Town Meeting member and member of the Mass. Rehab. Statewide Transportation Task Force, and Walter Wolnik, citizen.

The Board turned to **Old Business**.

Old Business

Redesign of Intersection at Route 116 (West Street) and Pomeroy Lane (Pomeroy Village)

The Board began the meeting with a review of the October 30, 2008, public meeting, held at the Crocker Farm School. General consensus was that the meeting had been very helpful. Many opinions and recommendations were expressed. However there had been no clear direction expressed by the public about the location of the bus stops and no unanimity about a northern crosswalk in the vicinity of Dancer Computer. Ms. Grandonico noted that she had concerns about the false sense of security that might be engendered by a crosswalk in this northern location.

The Board discussed the possibility of on-street parking near the intersection. Mr. Skeels stated that on-street parking would only work farther away from the intersection because of the limitations imposed by the width of the right-of-way.

The Board discussed where the crosswalks should be in the intersection. If the crosswalks are pulled back from the intersection, the travel distance across the road is shorter. If the crosswalks are pushed out into the intersection, the person crossing the road has a greater distance to travel, but may end up closer to the beginning of the sidewalk leading to his destination. Mr. Skeels noted that the sidewalk on the northwest corner could be located behind the trees if more land could be taken from the private property on that corner.

Ms. Grandonico asked if grass would grow in the “splitter islands”. Mr. Skeels stated that it is very difficult to get anything to grow in these islands. Amherst College puts a lot of resources into maintaining the islands near their campus.

Ms. Brestrup distributed plans showing the widths of roadways in other village center intersections around town and in the downtown area. If turning lanes and bike lanes are added to West Street, north and south of the intersection, the roadway width will be about 42 feet. The plans of the other village centers and the downtown show roadways ranging from 33 feet wide (Pelham Road) to 71 feet wide (North Pleasant Street).

Mr. Wolnik noted that a landscape contractor had planted the island at the North Amherst Village Center. Ms. Winston noted that Sunderland also has a nice planting in the intersection just before the bridge. She commented that there are low evergreen shrubs that do well in this type of environment.

Mr. Skeels reviewed the plans for the intersection, showing proposed turning lanes for northbound and southbound traffic and 5 foot wide bike lanes on either side. He reiterated that the DPW won't paint bike signs on the lanes if they are less than 5 feet wide. He stated that there is room for a 5 foot wide grass belt on the east side and a 4 ½ to 5 foot wide grass belt on the west.

The Board discussed the fact that the schedule for the work in the intersection seems to be in question because of lack of funds, but that CDBG (Community Development Block Grant) money might be used for some of the work. Mr. Forrest stated that the town may be able to get some funding from PVTVA to do this work. He offered to contact Congressman Olver's office about funding. The Board and Mr. Skeels agreed to proceed as if the construction work could be started in the spring.

Mr. Skeels noted that the DRB would need to make decisions about materials to be used in the intersection. The Board discussed the use asphalt versus the use of granite and concrete with brick edging, similar to the paving used in the downtown area. The Board discussed the pattern of expansion/construction joints on the pavement. Board members agreed that the perpendicular joints were appropriate for crosswalks, but that the diagonal joints might be considered for the sidewalks. Board members liked the idea of crosswalks being constructed like the ones downtown, with concrete in the center, brick pavers along the sides and flush granite edging.

Mr. Skeels noted that he is preparing a cost estimate for use in the CDBG grant application. He will base his cost estimate on the use of concrete, brick pavers and granite.

The Board discussed the impact of road widening, specifically the addition of turning lanes, on people with disabilities. Mr. Forrest stated that his wheelchair is electric, so he has an easier time crossing and did not object to the wider crossing. However, someone on crutches or in a manually-operated wheelchair might have a different point of view. Mr. Forrest offered to find someone with a manual wheelchair to speak to the DRB at its next meeting. Mr. Skeels noted that signal phasing can be adjusted to allow for a longer crossing time.

The Board agreed not to vote on the issue of turning lanes and the location of bus stops at this meeting, but to wait until the next meeting when they might have additional information.

With respect to the turning lanes, Mr. Skeels stated that the DPW should obtain updated traffic counts for the intersection, since the counts they have are outdated.

The Board agreed to meet on December 10th and to invite Jane Ashby, Chair of the Public Transportation and Bicycle Committee, along with a person who uses a manual wheelchair, to present their viewpoints with respect to the intersection.

Mr. Skeels presented alternative designs for the location of the bus stops. The alternatives are as follows:

- Northbound – leave the bus stop in its current location and pave the entire island where the stop is located to accommodate a sidewalk and a bus shelter

