



TOWN HALL
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March 11, 2009

DRB Memorandum #2009-02

Memo to: Bonnie Weeks, Building Commissioner
Jonathan Tucker, Planning Director
From: Christine Brestrup, Senior Planner
Subject: DRB Meeting
February 24, 2009

The Tuesday, February 24, 2009, meeting of the Design Review Board began at 7:05 p.m. in the Town Room, Town Hall. Members Janet Winston (Chair), Jonathan Salvon, Kathryn Grandonico and Jim Wald were present, along with Senior Planner, Christine Brestrup. Also present were Jason Skeels, Town Engineer, Peter Lillya, a member of the Public Transportation and Bicycle Committee, Margo McMahan, a resident of Amherst, and Luke DiStefano of Bohler Engineering. Jane Ashby, Chair of the Public Transportation and Bicycle Committee, arrived at 7:50 p.m.

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 discussion with a presentation by Margo McMahan, a resident of Amherst, who lives at Pomeroy Court, in the vicinity of the intersection, and who uses a wheelchair. Ms. McMahan made the following statements with regard to her experience navigating the intersection at West Street and Pomeroy Lane:

- No curb cuts were installed after the new traffic lights were put in;
- There is only one existing curb cut, at the southeast corner, where there is often a mud puddle and dirt;
- Coming out of Pomeroy Court, Ms. McMahan crosses Pomeroy Lane at the driveway of the Montessori School or the Kingdom Hall (Jehovah's Witnesses), since there is no sidewalk on the north side of Pomeroy Lane;
- She often rides in the street because of the lack of crosswalks and sidewalks;
- Sometimes she wheels down to Atkins Fruit Bowl and other places that are far from her home;
- She uses the bike lanes when riding in the street;
- Drivers have generally been good to her;
- Sometimes she uses the Gates and Johnson property to gain access to West Street from Pomeroy Court, crosses West Street at Dancer Computer and then wheels down the west side of West Street to get to the shops at the southwest corner;
- There are three (3) people who use wheelchairs who live in the Pomeroy Court Coop; there are also people with cognitive disabilities and four (4) elders who live there as well;
- The intersection was not developed for this kind of community;
- A strobe flasher is needed for the traffic signals, for hearing-impaired people;
- The bus drivers are good and are used to seeing people in wheelchairs;

- The bus stop on the east side of West Street works well because it has a curb and the bus ramp can lower onto the curb rather than onto the street;
- Ms. McMahon uses the para-transit service;
- The lack of sidewalks (on Pomeroy Lane) poses formidable challenges to her;
- Ms. McMahon would like to see sidewalks on West Pomeroy Lane as well, for access to public events that occur occasionally at the Hickory Ridge Golf Course;
- There are no lights on West Pomeroy Lane, so using the road at night is dangerous;
- Ms. McMahon would like to be able to wheel to the South Amherst Common, along Pomeroy Lane, but there are no sidewalks that go all the way to the Common;
- The existing sidewalk on the south side of Pomeroy Lane has frost heaves and tree stumps and is overgrown with vegetation;
- Ms. McMahon enjoys living in South Amherst and supports the businesses there;
- She hopes the sidewalk and crosswalk changes will have even surfaces; she doesn't like the downtown sidewalk and crosswalk surfaces; they have heaved and are bumpy and uncomfortable;
- The entryway into the Hess station from Pomeroy Lane is also very dangerous; there is often a bottleneck there during the afternoon rush hour; there are too many entries into the Hess station;
- There should be sidewalks on both sides of Pomeroy Lane;
- Ms. McMahon supports bike lanes;
- The sidewalk on the west side of Route 116 (West Street) going south from the intersection is problematic;
- She would be happy to meet members of the DRB on site to show them examples of what she has spoken about.

Mr. Lillya noted that the new bus stops will have 4" curbs for the bus ramps.

Ms. Winston thanked Ms. McMahon for her comments and said that they were very enlightening.

The Board turned to **Appointments**.

DRB #2009-00011, 243 Triangle Street, Bohler Engineering for TD Bank, NA – replace one internally-illuminated pylon sign, one internally-illuminated wall sign and one non-illuminated wall sign

Recommended Approval of the proposed signs, without conditions

Luke DiStefano of Bohler Engineering presented the application. He described the intent of his client to “re-image” TD Banknorth and to change its name to TD Bank. There are between 400 and 700 locations that are undergoing this change. The colors of the signs will be the same as the existing signs and the make-up and locations of the new signs will be essentially the same as those of the existing signs. There are six signs in total that the applicant would like to replace, as follows:

1. **A pylon sign** – 10 feet tall x 5'-9 5/8" wide, a total of about 58 square feet, to be installed approximately 25 feet back from the front property line. This sign is to be constructed of lexan with vinyl graphics and will be lighted with interior illumination. It will replace a pylon sign of similar size that is also interior-lit. The sign will be dark green with lettering in lighter green and white – “TD Bank” and “Open 7 Days”. It is proposed to sit in the existing raised planting bed.
2. **A wall sign** – 1'-6" tall x 8'-2" wide, a total of 12.25 square feet, to be installed above the rear entry door, to replace the existing larger (interior-lit) sign; it will be of the same colors, with the same lettering as the pylon sign. It will also be interior-lit. This sign will cover approximately 4.1% of the wall area.

3. **A wall sign** – 1'-0" tall x 6'-5 1/8" wide, a total of 6.43 square feet, to be installed to the left of the front entry door, to replace the existing, slightly larger sign. This sign will be of the same colors, with the same lettering as signs #2 and #3. It will not be interior-lit. The sign will cover approximately 2.1% of the wall area.
4. **A wall sign** – 2'-0" tall x 1'-4" wide, a total of 2.66 square feet, to be installed to the right of the front entry door, to replace the existing decal on the door, showing hours of operation. This sign will not be illuminated and will be of similar colors as the other signs.
5. **A parking sign in the rear parking lot** – 1'-3 1/2" high, 1'-0" wide, pole-mounted, smaller than the existing parking sign; it will be an aluminum panel, painted to match the other signs, with the words "TD Bank" and "Reserved for TD Bank Customers".
6. **A wall sign** – 1'-5 3/4" high x 2'-11 3/4" wide, to be installed on the front wall of the drive-through, to replace a larger sign; this sign will not be illuminated; it will consist of an aluminum panel painted to match the other signs, with lettering to indicate "TD" and "Drive-thru" and "ATM"

The Board members commented that the new sign plan was cleaner and more consistent than the existing sign plan.

Jason Skeels, Town Engineer, noted that there is a buried drain line that runs through the area where the pylon sign is located. Care should be taken if excavation is required to install the new pylon sign.

The Board returned to **Old Business**.

Old Business

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

Ms. Winston noted that Ms. McMahon would like the walkways in Pomeroy Village to be different from those in the center of town, because of the bumpy surface and the fact that frost heaves lift the bricks. Mr. Skeels noted that there had been a lot of complaints at first about the downtown sidewalks but that the design had changed to respond to the complaints.

Ms. Grandonico stated that she supports the idea of a strobe or blinking light for crossing. She also noted that Ms. McMahon was supportive of the idea of a multi-use lane.

Mr. Lillya expressed concern about the combination of traffic speed and crosswalks. Ms. Winston suggested that there be reflectors on rods at the crosswalks, but Mr. Skeels noted that this might contribute to "sign clutter".

Mr. Skeels described changes to the plans for the intersection, since the last DRB meeting, including the addition of two (2) bike loops at the bus stops and lines on the plans to demarcate lanes. He stated that the west edge of the proposed multi-use path will coincide with the west edge of the existing sidewalk, because the road will be moved to the east, and the bike lanes in the road, in the vicinity of the intersection, will be eliminated and replaced with the multi-use path.

Mr. Skeels recommended the use of "structural soil" to allow tree roots to grow under the new pathway. He explained that structural soil is a combination of graded base material (larger size particles) with soil and an absorbent material mixed in to allow for root growth and absorption of water. He stated that the crosswalks should have a pattern of scoring perpendicular to the line of pedestrian travel because of construction issues. He noted that there will be a \$200,000 difference between the installation of asphalt sidewalks and the installation of concrete and brick sidewalks in the Village Center. The plan shows that all of the sidewalks and crosswalks will be concrete with brick, except for the multi-use path, which will be asphalt. There should be reflectorized lines painted on either side of the crosswalks to make them more visible to drivers.

Mr. Lillya suggested that the northernmost crosswalk [at Dancer Computer] should be entirely a painted/striped crosswalk, rather than a concrete crosswalk. Ms. Winston agreed, suggesting that a painted crosswalk at that location would stay smooth and would be good for those in wheelchairs.

Mr. Skeels gave a general overview of the plan, as developed to date, for the benefit of those who had not attended previous meetings. He mentioned the splitter islands, the multi-use path on the west side of Route 116, the pros and cons of installing a crosswalk near Glendale Road, the relocated bus stops, turning lanes, etc. He noted that the multi-use path would be 10' wide near the intersection but would need to be reduced to 8 feet in width south of the intersection. He further noted that the Norwottuck Rail Trail is 8 feet wide and the sidewalk in front of Hampshire College, to which this path will eventually connect, is 8 feet wide.

Ms. Ashby asked if the splitter islands were too far from the intersection and commented that cars may slow down and speed up again. Mr. Skeels explained that the splitter islands will be approximately 800 to 900 feet from the intersection and that the bridge going south is a "choke point". The splitter island cannot be moved because of the bridge and the location of driveways in the vicinity.

There was discussion of the width of the multi-use path and the fact that the path will run immediately along the roadway with no grass strip when it goes over the bridge. Mr. Skeels stated that a guardrail would probably be needed where the path runs right along the roadway.

There was discussion about the fact that cyclists coming up from Hampshire College will need to cross two lanes of traffic as they approach the intersection, to gain access to the multi-use path, and then will need to cross back again on the north side of the intersection to return to the bike lane. To avoid this, experienced cyclists can remain in the vehicular travel lane. "Share-the-road-signs" might be used to remind drivers that cyclists will be in the lanes.

Ms. Ashby expressed concern that there would now be no bike lanes on the road and that this was antithetical to the "Complete Streets" theory of roadway design, which is meant to accommodate all users on a shared roadway – the get pedestrians, cyclists and cars to share the streets. She expressed concern that the design would be creating a discontinuity for riders on West Street.

Ms. Ashby questioned the need for left turn lanes, stating that the design prioritized car traffic over bike traffic. She asked about the data that supports the need for left turn lanes.

Mr. Skeels acknowledged that the Level of Service at the intersection was not bad. He stated that another turning count would need to be done. The previous count was done in 2006. He stated that one of the primary reasons for the turning lanes was to eliminate the need for cars to swerve around those who are turning left. This swerving movement erodes the pavement edge and makes ruts. He stated that documenting the swerving movements along with the turning movements would be helpful. He will plan on doing these counts in April, while the colleges are still in session and will do the counts during the 2-hour a.m. and p.m. peaks.

Ms. Ashby expressed a strong opinion that the design prioritizes vehicles over pedestrians and cyclists in a Village Center.

There was extensive discussion about the need for turning lanes and whether there would be negative effects on the Village Center as a result of a widened roadway.

Mr. Skeels described the locations of the proposed light fixtures, noted that there would be bike loops and benches at the bus stops, as well as a bus shelter on the northbound side with a half-bench and space to accommodate wheelchairs. Mr. Skeels will try to produce a lighting plan showing the areas where the light will fall (a photometric or lumen plan).

Mr. Salvon stated that it would be helpful to have the new traffic counts and data on turning and swerving movements before the next meeting with the public.

Town Common – signs

Mr. Wald, Chair of the Historical Commission, stated that he thought it would be the opinion of the Historical Commission that signs on the Common should only be considered as part of a systematic sign design process for the entire town center.

Ms. Brestrup will invite the proponents of the signs for the Farmers’ Market to come and speak with the Design Review Board at its next meeting.

The Board turned to **Future Meetings.**

Future Meetings

The Board scheduled its next two meetings for March 17 and March 31 at 6:30 p.m.

The meeting adjourned at 8:53 p.m.

Cc:	Anita Licitis, DRB member	Peter Lillya, Public Transportation Committee
	Janet Winston, DRB member	Jane Ashby, Public Transportation Committee
	Kathryn Grandonico, DRB member	Rob Crowner, Public Works Committee
	Jonathan Salvon, DRB member	Larry Shaffer, Town Manager
	Aaron Hayden, Select Board	Jason Skeels, Town Engineer
	Jeffrey Bagg, Senior Planner	Guilford Mooring, Superintendent of Public Works
	Nate Malloy, Associate Planner	Roy Rosenblatt, Director of Community Development