

Sunderland Village Center Committee (SVCC) Zoom meeting

Minutes of Meeting November 3, 2021

1. In “attendance”: Lorin Starr, Chair, Christyl Drake-Tremblay, Steve Gowa, Jessica Skibiski, Liz Sillin and Rock Warner. Geoff Kravitz, Town Administrator, and guests Dan Murphy, Susan Triolo and someone identified on the Zoom link as being “Sunderland Congregational Church.
2. Meeting called to order 7:01 PM by Lorin.
3. Minutes of May 26, 2021, July 13, 2021 and September 10 and 22 were all approved as amended. On August 9 there was no quorum but notes from meeting were reviewed.
4. Local Rapid Recovery Planning Grant (LRRP Grant). The report of the OverUnder team was submitted and a request was made for additional funding on September 24 – requests was for additional funding for branding, joint marketing, addressing mobility issues and exploring events were submitted.

Lorin noted that the crosswalks at the intersection of Rts 47 and 116 are no longer visible; the road markings have faded. She asked whether the road be repainted in a more colorful way for visibility, as suggested by OverUnder. Geoff indicated that DOT is not doing any painting on Rt 116 until spring at the earliest. It was suggested that Geoff request that painting be done as a safety issue. Geoff indicated that it was not likely DOT would agree to perform any painting in anything other than standard white.

Committee members discussed the OverUnder project – they were “fresh eyes” on the Village Center, gave us a number of things to think about and talk about. Next steps seem less clear – our original goals were to improve walkability, consider the pluses and minuses of the roundabout, and to focus on how we can enhance, rather than detract from, the Sunderland village center.

All agreed that cleaning up signage, procuring a meaningful mobility study, and keeping channels of communication open with DOT are important near-term goals. A mobility study examines how people move through the town – on foot, on bicycles, and in vehicles. An in-depth traffic study will show traffic counts and routes of travel and means of travel. There was a general feeling that we need better, more robust and more recent data. Regional economic development grant opportunities will be explored. Geoff indicated that he was told there would be assistance in helping finding funding for projects.

With respect to Mass DOT plans, Geoff indicated that the roundabout is not on its “current list” and therefore our committee should explore options and provide consensus input to DOT. The committee discussed the need to determine what problem we are trying to solve.

5. MA DOT Rt 116 sidewalk project. The proposed sidewalks will be concrete, and DOT agreed to push them as far back from the road as possible on the Garage Road/Sugarloaf Frostie side. It was reported that the sidewalks will need to cure and therefore cannot be plowed this winter.

Geoff is working with DOT to explore lighting options, and to seek clarity from DOT as to whether this is a town or state responsibility.

6. Complete Streets update. South Main Street and South Silver lane projects are done, although loam and seeding was unsatisfactory and will be redone in the spring. Falls Road bike shared lane markers (sharrows) have been completed. Speeding interventions (signage that reflects a driver's current speed) may be having some effect. If we could pull data from the sign and learn when speeding happens and what percentage of people speed, it would be useful. We have data as to the average speed before the signs were installed; we would like to learn if the speed signage has had the intended effect.
7. North Main Street project. Geoff reported that the project is largely complete. Some concerns that the permanent structures were installed below final grade on the road. We will need to find out how many drivers' tires get compromised by the issue. It will be re-paved in five years and the problem will likely be corrected then but not before unless it turns out to be a big problem for drivers.

The only curbing on North Main is by the Buttonball. There was no curb there before and therefore no new curbs were installed.

8. School Street No specific update, but Geoff has learned that ARPA funds (COVID stimulus funds) can be used for design purposes. We have a design plan but not engineered plans, so he will explore the possibility of obtaining funding for same.
9. Riverside Park. As predicted, bids came in significantly over the budget. The project is being scaled back.
10. Rock Warner reported that the Pathways Committee may be disbanded. He is the Pathways committee representative on the Village Center Committee- the committee expressed that his perspective as a business owner is valuable and hoped that he would continue to be a member.
11. Gracious Greens – As a marijuana retail sales vendor, Gracious Greens is required to have a host community agreement with the town. The ZBA will be addressing safety concerns, hours of operation, issues of possible negative impact to the area (smell, loitering), and there will be an obligation of the vendor to make a charitable contribution to the benefit of the town. There was discussion as to how this could be used for a positive impact for the village center.

Meeting adjourned 8:40 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Sillin