



[DRAFT]

Town of Manchester Sustainability Commission

Wednesday, April 17th, 2024

6:35 p.m. – 8:05 p.m.

Location: Zoom Virtual Meeting

MINUTES

Attendees: Peg Hackett (Chair), Geoff King, Oksan Bayulgen, Jeffrey Schegelmilch, Rebecca Fowler, Edwina Mik-Lumor, Terry Robinson

Absent: Gene DeJoannis (Co-Chair), William Chudzik, Zachary DelGaizo, Paris Bazemore, Victoria McBrien, Patrick McKee, Shannon Baldassario

Attendees (Other): Austin Murray, Rachel Schnabel, Tim O’Neil, Coryn Clark

1. Introductions

a. Call to Order

Chair Peg Hackett called the meeting to order at 6:35pm.

b. Public Comment

Coryn Clark thanked the Commission for its support of the bicycle rack and pollinator garden project being completed by the Unitarian Universalist Society via ARPA funding. She updated the Commission that the bike rack has been delivered and will soon be installed.

c. Communications

Chair Peg Hackett reviewed the type of communications that were appropriate for this section of the agenda for the new members in attendance. This included letters or other communications from the public, updates from other Commissions or Boards, and events taking place in Town or elsewhere that you would like others to be aware of.

Oksan Bayulgen asked about the status of the Downtown Initiative, and if anyone had heard of the “Save Main Street” campaign that was collecting signatures for a petition to halt progress on the Main Street infrastructure changes. Neighbors had asked Oksan and Patrick McKee about the plans for Main Street and how the petition could impact the plans the Town has, so she was wondering if anyone had any information on that topic.

Town Administrative Attorney Tim O’Neil responded and informed the Commission that the “Save Main Street” group is planning to collect the required number of signatures to put an

ordinance in front of the Board of Directors that would a) direct that there be no changes to the number of lanes on Main Street and b) any new developer of the building at 942 Main Street be required to preserve at least 110 parking spaces for public use. The petition would require the support of 5% of all registered voters in Town (roughly 1,700 signatures). The Board would then have 45 days to respond. If no action is taken, the proposal/ordinance would be put on a public referendum.

Oksan asked if there was anything that the Commission could do to support the proposed plan? Tim responded that residents are going to form their own opinion on this issue, and groups may be formed that support the Town's plan. He projected that after feedback is incorporated into the plan, the Board will review and vote at some point over the summer on a final version.

Rachel put two links into the meeting chat, one a story map of the proposed changes, and the Your Voice Matters page where residents can share their feedback:

- <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/5fb1c7453a3948a7afd8906871afb185/>
- <https://yourvoicemattersmanchesterct.com/downtown-manchester-improvements-project?preview=true>

Terry Robinson asked Tim to clarify if there was a possibility that without a petition, the proposed changes to Main Street would not need to be put to a vote—Tim agreed and informed the Commission that historically, these types of projects are not generally put to the voters (Broad Street, Hartford Road, etc.).

Rachel informed the Commission about plans to hold a “Take-It or Leave-It” event at the May 4th Community Cleanup/Free Drop Off event at the transfer station. At the event residents will have the opportunity to leave items that they feel are still usable, and other residents would be able to take them. Due to staffing shortages, Rachel asked if any Commission members would like volunteer to staff the event in order to help manage the items and assist residents as needed. The event would take place from 7:15 – 2:30.

Rebecca Fowler, Oksan Bayulgen, Jeff Schegelmilch, Edwina Mik-Lumor, and Peg Hackett all volunteered to assist during the event.

Rachel also explained that until upgrades to the transfer station take place (reliant upon how the landfill is expanded), there are plans to make this type of event permanent, but likely not in the short or medium term.

Peg Hackett and Rebecca Fowler recommended that Rachel consider advertising the event on one of several “Buy Nothing” Facebook pages that are active in Town.

d. Adoption of the March Meeting Minutes [Town of Manchester, CT Public Documents \(ecode360.com\)](#)

Jeffrey Schegelmilch moved to approve the March meeting minutes.

Seconded by Oksan Bayulgen.

An amendment was proposed to correct the attendance: Terry Robinson was absent from the March meeting.

In Favor: Peg Hackett, Geoff King, Oksan Bayulgen, Jeffrey Schegelmilch, Rebecca Fowler, Edwina Mik-Lumor

Opposed: None.

Abstain: Terry Robinson.

The motion passed.

2. Review of Town Board/Commission Procedures

Tim O'Neil presented an overview of the general rules and procedures for all Town Boards and Commissions, for new members and existing members who may need a refresher. The items discussed included:

- The Commission is considered a part of the town of Manchester as a public agency of the Town of Manchester and is therefore subject to the open meetings and public information rules and regulations of the Freedom of Information Act.
- Agendas are required for all regular and special meetings and must be posted at least 24 hours before the meeting is held (on the Town's website or Clerk's Office). The purpose of the agenda is to structure the meeting so that there is a degree of certainty regarding what will be discussed.
- Missing three consecutive Commission meetings is subject to dismissal from the Board or Commission, as per the Town Charter.
- If there is not a quorum (at least 6 members present at the meeting), the meeting can still proceed, but no business can be conducted. "Business" is considered anything that needs a vote other than adjournment, such as approving minutes or recommending a policy to the Board of Directors.
- Tim clarified for the group that any meetings that discuss Commission-related business requires a public posting of the meeting details and agenda. Closed meetings are only permissible for the discussion of personnel issue, real estate transactions, etc. This means that all subcommittees and working groups are required to follow the steps of posting meeting dates and agendas.
- Regarding conflicts of interest, those would usually arise if a Commission member or a family member of a Commission member or a company that a member works for has a financial interest in some kind of a decision that's being made by the Commission. In those instances an abstention from the vote would be advisable.
- There is no need to post an estimate end time for the meetings on the agenda.

Austin will search the archives for Commission bylaws that may have been developed and send them to Tim and other Commissioners.

Austin asked Tim about the advisability of the Microsoft Teams group for the Commission, to be discussed later in the meeting. Tim responded that it was fine as long as discussions were kept to references to certain articles that they saw or certain links that they think other members should take a look at.

3. New Online Tools for Commission

a. Microsoft Teams Group

Austin explained that based on conversations at the last meeting, and after consulting with the Town's IT department, a dedicated Microsoft Teams channel was created that Commissioners can utilize to share interesting articles, news, and potential project ideas and policy suggestions for discussion at upcoming Commission meetings.

Austin sent invitation links to all members, which may have gone to spam folders. Commissioners can sign up for an account and set up two factor authentication to access the group.

b. Policy & Project Submission Form

Austin shared the newly developed Project Submission Form that Commissioners can utilize to submit project or policy ideas that can be added to future agendas. The link was shared in the agenda email.

4. Unfinished Business

a. Eversource Community Partnership Initiative Working Group

Austin informed the Commission that The Town has received the funding (\$10,000) and will launch the project via a press release with quotes from Peg and Mayor Moran.

Austin has also begun working with Communications on outreach materials.

Austin reminded that Commission that both Oksan and Gene expressed interest in serving on a working group that has yet to be convened. If anyone else would like to join, please let him know.

b. Long-Term Planning Working Group

Austin reminded the Commission that Terry and Bill expressed interest in convening a long-term planning working group to cross-reference the new ISO document, SustainableCT criteria, Manchester NEXT, and CRCOG's regional climate plans in order to give the Commission more general direction. Peg and Gene will also be joining that effort, and monthly meetings will be scheduled in the coming days.

c. Conservation Commission Update

Geoff King provided the following update:

- The Conservation Commission is having conversations with the Town Manager regarding invasives, and the way that most of the walking trails and open spaces are on Town land but are maintained by volunteers. However, the Town no longer wants the volunteers to utilize chemical treatments on invasives, which can limit effectiveness.
- The Conservation Commission wants to emphasize the need for support via the Sustainability Commission (perhaps through long-term planning) on air, water, and forest issues facing the Town, which can impact the insect population.
- The Conservation Commission would like to create a set of best practices around open space, water, urban forests, etc.

Rebecca Fowler asked if there was any way to become involved with the invasives issue. Geoff responded that concrete actions probably won't happen until the Town outlines what is allowable, and the Commission identifies what the main invasives of concern are, and what the best eradication plan is for each.

5. New Business/Items for Future Agenda

None.

6. Next Meeting – May 15th, 2024

7. Adjournment

Oksan Bayulgen moved to adjourn the meeting.

Seconded by Edwina Mik-Lumor.

In Favor: Peg Hackett, Geoff King, Oksan Bayulgen, Jeffrey Schegelmilch, Rebecca Fowler, Edwina Mik-Lumor, Terry Robinson.

Opposed: None.

Abstain: None.

The motion passed unanimously.