

Main Street Sidewalk Replacement Project Community Meeting.
October 17, 2020

C.J. Thomas, Town Council Chairman, moderated the Main Street Sidewalk Replacement Community Meeting on October 17, 2020, outside at the St. Patrick's Church parking lot, with social distancing guidelines in place. After a brief review of the upcoming sidewalk project, there was a question and answer session. Questions were answered by C.J. Thomas, Russ Arnold, and Police Chief Melanson.

Question: *Will Colton Street be realigned as part of this phase of the Streetscape project?*

Answer: Funding for this phase of the project does not include the realignment of Colton Street, however, the Colton Street realignment is being considered for the upcoming spring. There will be a community meeting later in the fall or early winter to assure this is well received by the community.

Question: *Will lighting be included in this phase and at what intervals will the lights be placed?*

Answer: Lighting is not included in phase 1. But in future phases, when lighting is considered, they will be installed in an as needed basis. These decorative lights will not replace the existing streetlights, but rather, they will enhance the streetlights that already exist on Main Street.

Question: *The new sidewalk that is slated to be added on the east side of Main Street, will not connect to any sidewalk, so there will be a break in the connectivity, is there anything that can be done about that?*

Answer: On the east side of Main Street, the sidewalk will be replaced from Route 4 to the Main Gate subdivision which includes a segment of new sidewalk. It is the intent of the committee that if any new developments are proposed on Main Street, the project will require new sidewalks to be installed in front of a proposed project, thereby allowing more sidewalks to be installed.

Question: *What was the rationale to start the sidewalks at the start of Route 4?*

Answer: New sidewalks were installed as part of the State of CT's roadwork on Route 4 in 2019. The committee thought it was logical to continue the new sidewalks from Route 4 and made this the starting point of the project. Grant money was awarded and will be used to replace as much sidewalk as possible. If the sidewalks were started at the Route 10 end of Main Street, this would produce spot areas of the new sidewalk with older blacktop sidewalks instead of long stretches of consistent new sidewalks.

Question: *What will be the process used to replace the sidewalks?*

Answer: Safety will be a top priority of the sidewalk project. Keeping safety in mind, sidewalks will be replaced in intervals of 100 feet at a time. This will also assure that residents are not inconvenienced.

Question: *The intersection of Tunxis and Main is very wide, and cars take the turn at high speed, while children wait for the school bus at that intersection. Can anything be done to make this area safer?*

Answer: When the project gets to that intersection, tightening the radius of the intersection will be considered.

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Question: *Can you explain the bidding process? How can we be assured that quality products will be used?*

Answer: Over the years, the Town of Farmington has had an excellent history of successfully executing bids and contracts on a variety of different projects. This bid package will include a requirement that contractors provide a one-year guarantee on the new sidewalks. The bidding procedure requires that we accept the lowest responsible bid, which means if the lowest bidder doesn't have good reviews or we've had problems in the past with a contractor then we do not have to accept that bid.

Question: *Why wasn't someone from the Town Council subcommittee a Main Street resident?*

Answer: Both Peter Mastrobattista and C.J. Thomas live in the Village and are members of the subcommittee. Several members from the Farmington Village Committee, which spearheaded the BSC Group Streetscape Improvement Masterplan, live on Main Street and are Village stakeholders.

Question: *Why will the sidewalks material be concrete rather than blacktop?*

Answer: Concrete has a much longer life.

Question: *How can we be assured that the sidewalks will last longer and will not need repairs much like the sidewalks in front of the cemetery?*

The quality of the sidewalks and the materials used depend on the bidding package and the contractor chosen. Russ Arnold will check out the sidewalks in front of the cemetery.

Question: *what will the homeowner be responsible for once the concrete sidewalks are installed? Will concrete sidewalks be more expensive to maintained. Can you comment on their durability?*

Answer: Every resident is responsible for the maintenance of their sidewalks. There aren't additional maintenance costs associated with concrete sidewalks. The sidewalks will be graded so water runs from them, there shouldn't be a need to salt the new sidewalks, snow shoveling will be required. As for the durability, concrete is very durable and lasts a long time. There are concrete sidewalks in town that were installed 40 years ago that are still in good shape.

Question: *Will digging a six-inch base affect tree roots? What will be the immediate and long-term effects on the trees? How will the roots be treated in order to protect them?*

The existing blacktop and other materials will be ripped out and removed, and the new sidewalk will have the same elevation as the older sidewalk. In order to maintain the integrity of the roots, the sidewalks will be raised, when they are near the tree and root system. The bidding package will state that the existing materials will be removed, and the root systems must be maintained. The intent is to replace the existing sidewalk with a safer more suitable sidewalk while protecting the trees.

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Question: *Should one consistent width be used throughout the historical District?*

Answer: The project has to take into consideration tree roots, and varying topography so the contractor will do their best to maintain a consistent width throughout the project ; it is the intent of the committee that in instances where the width will differ then a a slow taper effect will be implemented that will blend the entire sidewalk.

Question: *There has been a lot of speeding especially in the school district zone. What can be done about that?*

Answer: Chief Melanson explained that during the early COVID shutdown, there was less traffic and people started speeding. Many towns and other municipalities are experiencing an increase in speeders. Speed signs are used routinely to gather data. This data tells us that speeding in Farmington has also increased. To address the increase in speeders, the Farmington Police Dept. received a state grant to hold a 2- day widespread speeding enforcements initiative. The Farmington PD gave out 40 tickets per day. They also use selective enforcement and have conducted this enforcement on Route 4 and the Miss Porters and St. Patrick's Church neighborhood. The Chief also explained that in order to put a school zone sign on Main Street, DOT approval must be obtained.

Question: *What will be the process to work with individual homeowners whose properties pose challenges with the project?*

Answer: If a homeowner encounters a problem with the project they should inform Russ Arnold, Farmington's Director of Public Works. After the bid is awarded all property owners on Main Street will receive a project schedule and timeframe. Homeowners can work with the town inspectors, and the Department of Public Works to address individual concerns.

Question: *Over the past six months there has been an increased in truck speed and noise. Will residents have an opportunity to block specific contractors, whose trucks have been speedy in the neighborhood from the bidding?*

Answer: The Town has a bidding process in place to handle all bids. If residents have a problem with any particular contractor they can share those names with the Director of Public Works.

Question: *There is a lot of inconsistency in the width of the current sidewalks. Would it be possible to have all the sidewalks in the historic district be a consistent 4 feet in width?*

Answer: The Human Relation's Commission worked with the Gateway and the Village Committee to develop the project's priorities. One of the project's priorities is to make the sidewalks assessible to people of all abilities regardless of their disabilities. Current ADA requires sidewalks to be at least 5 feet in width.

Question: Can you describe the crosswalks?

Answer: Crosswalks will be made of stamped concrete with white reflective stripes and tactile warning signs.

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Additional Comments from Jay Tulin:

“Following in the footsteps of Ruth Grobe who was specifically appointed to the original committee to ensure that ADA compliance and universal design are adhered to. I, as an interested party and now as Chair of the Human Relations Commission on behalf of the HRC, believe it is critical that the work done and commitment made by that committee comes to fruition as this much needed project moves forward.

The public meeting on the 17th is specifically in regards to the sidewalks and some concerns were raised regarding ADA compliance to the streetscape plan. The commitment by the Town all along was to exceed ADA standards wherever possible with regard to the width of the sidewalks and other updated standards in the US Access Board's Pedestrian Rights-of-Way Guidelines (PROWAG). It does appear that the Town and the ad hoc committee intend to make every effort achieve this but the HRC is committed to staying involved in this process as the plans and work on the Village Center proceeds next year.

We would anticipate continued support by the public in voicing their support in taking whatever steps possible to achieve greater accessibility for everyone and especially the disability community in Farmington.”