Pursuant to notice duly filed with the Town Clerk, the West Concord Advisory Committee (WCAC) held a virtual online public meeting at 7:00 p.m. via https://zoom.us.

Members present:
Amy Kaiser, Chair
John Cooley
Alan Koder
Susan Mlodozeniec
Amy Robinson

Additional staff/committees represented:
Marcia Rasmussen, Director of Planning and Land Management
Steve Dookran, Town Engineer
Justin Richardson, Asst. Town Engineer

Public:
Sue Felshin, 19 Sunnyside Lane
Jeff Collins, 55 Highland Street
Ann Sussman, 534 Old Marlboro Road

Non-Staff Guest Presenters, on behalf of Concord Park Senior Living
Charles Gagnon, owner/operator of Concord Park Senior Living
Matt Lane, Director of Real Estate for Volunteers of America (VOA) Massachusetts
Mark Beaudry, Engineer with Meridian Associates

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 pm by A. Kaiser.

1. Approve minutes from April and May meetings

April Minutes - WCAC Meeting – A. Robinson noted that she was not yet a member of the WCAC at its April meeting and asked that the draft minutes be updated to reflect that. A. Robinson then moved to approve the minutes as amended. A. Koder seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved via a rollcall vote.

May Minutes – Joint Meeting with the West Concord Junction Cultural District Committee - S. Mlodozeniec moved to approve the minutes. A. Robinson seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved via a rollcall vote.
May Minutes – WCAC Meeting -  A. Kaiser suggested two spelling corrections and a correction to a comment about the need for public restrooms in the village center. A. Robinson moved to approve the minutes as amended. A. Koder seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved via a rollcall vote.

2. Commonwealth Avenue Complete Streets Improvements
S. Dookran and J. Richardson presented a conceptual plan for complete streets improvements to Commonwealth Avenue between Church Street and Laws Brook Road. Their presentation can be found here: https://concordma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/29843/CPW---Commonwealth-Avenue-Complete-Streets-Presentation-6-02-21

They noted:
- The Town’s complete streets policy adopted in 2018, followed by a prioritization plan in 2019, followed by funding from Mass DOT in 2020, which must be spent by Sept 2022
- The consultants for the project, The Engineering Corp (TEC), who have done previous work in the area
- Project goals, including improved multi-modal transportation, ADA compliant sidewalks, and improved pedestrian safety via higher curbs and bumpouts at crosswalks.
- Elements of the conceptual plan, including: Sharrows [painted bicycle symbols on the roadway] for cyclists (not sufficient space for bike lanes), redoing sidewalks and ramps on both sides of the street, reconstructing the curb line, and 2 crosswalks – one at Church Street, and one with bumpouts between Baharrell and Bradford
- Project timeline: completing the design this summer, bidding the work by late fall, and construction in two phases, beginning in spring 2022
- That both the roadway dimensions and the project budget are very tight; the number of bumpouts is modest because they are costly, and because they reduce the amount of on-street parking that can be accommodated. Truck movements and drainage are also considerations.

Comments, questions, and discussion covered the following topics:
- # of parking spaces that are lost in this design [answer: 3]
- Strategy for leveling the sidewalks
- Whether visual aids, signaling to drivers to slow down, would be part of the project [answer: no; no funding for this]
- Bicycle graphics stenciled on the street
  - J. Richardson noted that the width of the road and the desire to preserve on-street parking prevent bike lanes in this location. He added that the project’s emphasis was on improved walkability.
  - S. Dookran noted that a prior public process had identified this project as a priority, with a focus on addressing unacceptable existing sidewalk conditions (e.g., non-compliant slopes) and improving pedestrian amenities. He added that a rail trail is nearby.
  - S. Mlodozeniec asked what would be required to add a bike line
  - M. Rasmussen explained that a lane of on-street parking would have to be eliminated
- Concerns about the location and number of proposed crosswalks, including:
Concern that the increased distance between crosswalks in the proposed plan would make the street more difficult to cross; would pedestrians be more likely to cross between the proposed crosswalks, resulting in less safe conditions?

Statement that crosswalks are heavily used and that additional crosswalks are needed to provide a more walkable Commonwealth Ave to support the increase in pedestrian traffic

Concern that proposed crosswalk locations don’t support current desire lines/destinations

Request from multiple committee members that a crosswalk be retained at Bradford Street to support the over 200 people who work at the Mill and the flow of people – especially kids – heading to Reasons to Be Cheerful

Suggestion that an additional crosswalk is needed further west near the intersection on Commonwealth Ave and Laws Brook Road

Comment that adding additional bumpouts in the future at the proposed crosswalk near the station would be desirable, as there are fewer on-street parking spaces there

S. Felshin noted that she had been part of the West Concord Taskforce when 50 Baharrell was planned, and that there were some safety concerns at that time about the crosswalk at Bradford Street

S. Dookran warned that the consulting engineers wouldn’t sign off on crosswalk locations that aren’t safe, and stated that crosswalks are sometimes installed without due diligence by engineers and without accordance to national standards

J. Collins responded that…

- A prior study had included a detailed, vetted plan for crosswalks with bumpouts near Saltbox and Baharrell Street
- Questioned whether crosswalks have truly been installed in Concord without review by an engineer
- Stated that crosswalks should be a priority of this project, and should be placed in accordance with pedestrian desire lines. He emphasized that this project should be prioritizing pedestrians, NOT vehicular travel and truck movements

M. Rasmussen explained that further analysis showed truck movements did not work with bumpouts as shown in the previous plan cited by J. Collins, as trucks would turn into opposing traffic

A. Koder asked if trucks could be routed differently

J. Richardson stated that this approach would require directing tractor-trailers down private drives, which cannot be done.

S. Felshin noted that some towns in Europe have made entire stretches of road a shared road/sidewalk

- A. Robinson suggested an increased police presence when the project is first complete, to help drivers adapt to the new traffic pattern
3. Concord Park Senior Living: Driveway and Commuter Rail Parking Lot Modifications

The team from Concord Park Senior Living presented proposed changes to access and parking. The introduction to their presentation included the following:

- Thank you to Town staff for their assistance with the building renovation project; completion expected by end of year.
- Explanation that Concord Park is part of the National Volunteers of America – a faith-based non-profit organization focused on the vulnerable, including the elderly. Said that the aim is to provide great care, not to make a profit.
- Said they’ve been a good neighbor and want to continue serving the community, providing a beautiful, receptive environment.
- Noted that they were here for feedback on their site plan. Noted that the West Concord Junction Cultural District Committee (WCJDC) had also provided feedback on the site plan, as had Town staff. Noted that representatives of WCJCAC and WCAC had participated in a recent site walk to discuss proposed changes.

The team then described the site plan, noting:

- The location of the new building addition
- The planned addition of a “big canopy” for drop-off and pick-up
- Improvements at the entrance drive, including clearly marked lanes
- New crosswalk at the entrance to the rail trail; new warning signs; additional stop signs where parking lot angles
- Landscape improvements, including ground cover plantings and low-maintenance native plants. Considering tree pruning, planting and replacement trees where needed
- Replacement signage with LED downlighting at Commonwealth Ave; to be sited so as not to interfere with sight lines
- New lighting
- New fencing; may consider post and rail

The team then noted that:

- They hope the work would be done in August
- They are a non-profit that competes with other assisted living facilities for residents, so need to provide a great arrival experience
- They hope to reach an agreement with the Town to repave the whole driveway [maintained by Public Works], which is needed but costly

Committee and public comments included the following:

- A. Robinson (who attended site walk): Proposal makes a lot of sense.
  - Good plan to keep precise location of new sign fluid until its installation, to ensure sight lines preserved.
  - Current design for new sign at Commonwealth Ave is improved
  - Directional signage will be helpful; currently not clear where to go when in the lot.
  - No concerns about the proposal

- The Concord Park team noted that:
  - The MBTA hoped to put a sign in that area as well, and that there’s also discussion of signage for West Concord village, the BFRT, and perhaps a kiosk.
Suggested combining some of this other signage, or locating it on the other side of the tracks.

- They worked with Public Works to site yield signs
  - A. Robinson: Clearly marked lanes at entry/exit drive will be helpful
  - A. Koder: Will the new lighting be consistent with other lighting in the area? Will new fixtures be provided? What is the color temp? Will it be different?
    - Answer: Lighting complies with Town requirements; happy to share more info. Uniformity wanted but also reliability. Noted that they’d coordinate with the Town to get it right.
- S. Felshin: There’s a lot to like!
  - Thanks for doing something about the trees.
  - The big light on the current sign can be somewhat blinding so thanks for the improvements. Please use 2700K or lower [CONFIRM] in the new lighting.
  - New sign seems enormous, but it’s ok under our bylaw
  - Where you’re reshaping the driveway near the electric vehicle charging stations: will those parking spaces be lost?
    - Answer: No change in parking. We’re holding the curb line constant.
- A. Kaiser: Could a sidewalk be provided along the north side of the entry/exit drive?
  - Answer: No, insufficient space.
- S. Mlodozeniec: Could there be flower boxes or seasonable displays near the fence? The parking lot is so bleak. Something at eye level would be great
  - Answer: We’ll bring suggestion to our landscape architects
- A. Robinson: That’s a good idea. The West Concord Green Thumbs do a lot of plantings in the area and may have thoughts. Perhaps they’d be willing to help maintain these areas.
  - Answer: It’s always good to coordinate with others. As a non-profit, our resources are limited.

4. Update on Gerow Park Improvements
M. Rasmussen said she would provide a quick update in August, pending info from Asst. Town Manager Kate Hodges, and would send the latest plans to the Committee via email next week.

5. Update on potential for temporary seating at 13B site
M. Rasmussen said was coordinating with Patrick Cleary to secure his ok for seating on the lawn, and with Public Works on the purchase of some benches, tables and chairs. A. Robinson suggested asking 66 Commonwealth Avenue if seating would be ok there.

6. Liaison updates

- Trails Committee. A. Robinson’s update included garlic mustard efforts; identifying projects for incoming summer interns including management of invasive species; efforts to put trail maps near parking areas; and efforts to provide bike etiquette guidance in response to concerns about bike use on the trails.
• **Return of in-person meetings + shortage of meeting spaces?** A. Robinson relayed comments from a Select Board member who anticipated a space problem with the return of in-person meetings because the Town House is under construction.

  o M. Rasmussen explained that the Town was hoping for a vote from the legislature that would extend the timeline for returning to in-person meetings. She added that the Town House renovation would be complete in early August, and that some other meeting rooms ARE available.
  o A. Koder asked if remote meetings would continue to be an option
  o M. Rasmussen said the Town was hoping that would be the case, as meeting attendance has increased via Zoom

• **West Concord Junction Cultural District Committee.** S. Mlodozeniec reported that the WCJCDC was organizing a Porch Fest for Sept 25 (rain date Sept 26) and that a new mural was recently installed on the exterior wall of Saltbox Kitchen.

• **Article 31 on the Town Meeting warrant.** A. Kaiser reported that she had been contacted by the Climate Action Advisory Board, who had hoped to present to the WCAC tonight about Article 31, but were unable to make the meeting. Article 31 is related to prohibiting fossil fuel infrastructure in new construction. Members are encouraged to find out more about the Article in advance of Town Meeting.

• **Maintenance of Commuter Rail Lot.** A. Robinson noted that the West Concord commuter rail lot is in very poor condition: weedy, overgrown, with trees and paving in poor condition – an eyesore. She asked who maintains it and if there was anything WCAC could do to encourage improvements.

  o M. Rasmussen explained that ownership of the land is divided between the Town, the MBTA, and the state. An agreement stipulates that the MBTA maintains the platforms and the Town maintains the parking lot – but the Town is not always proactive about parking lot maintenance.
  o A. Robinson offered to draft a letter on behalf of the WCAC requesting attention to the lot and citing the agreement.
  o S. Mlodozeniec expressed support for such a letter, noting that the parking lot was very bleak.
  o A. Kaiser suggested that A. Robinson draft the letter and circulate it to the committee, for review and adoption at the WCAC’s next meeting.
  o M. Rasmussen offered to provide the agreement via email for A. Robinson to reference.

• **Fundraising and Grants.**

  o A. Koder asked whether the Town ever engages in fundraising.
  o M. Rasmussen described the circumstances where this occurs - sometimes for charitable efforts, as part of efforts to support local businesses, for land acquisitions – and noted that the Town pursues grants frequently.
  o A. Kaiser added that she’d also seen fundraising for building projects like the library renovation.
S. Mlodozeniec noted that she works for the state and comes across many grant opportunities that she could share, if appropriate.

M. Rasmussen responded that she gets grant info all the time, and while the Town isn’t eligible for all grant types, she would be happy to receive additional info on grant opportunities.

S. Mlodozeniec asked whether the Town assembles and submits the grant application if a community member or committee has a grant-eligible idea.

M. Rasmussen explained that the Town Manager has to approve all grants. She noted that she and her staff complete a lot of grant applications and sometimes receive assistance from residents.

- Prospective Member Ann Sussman. A. Koder asked if Ann Sussman was now officially a member of the WCAC. M. Rasmussen reported that the appointment was still in process.

7. Public Comment
   No public comments offered, except as referenced above.

Adjourned at 9:06 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Amy Kaiser