

Meeting Notes from 9 October 2018

Meeting Summary

The KCSC met on Tuesday, 9 October 2018, to discuss responses to issues raised by MassDOT about the 25% plan for Kelley's Corner. The meeting took place in Room 204 at the Acton Town Hall.

There were three steps associated with creating these responses.

- Kristen Guichard presented the key concerns raised by MassDOT, all related to costs, and possible alternatives aimed at reducing costs.
- The committee discussed these alternatives.
- The committee developed a set of recommendations from KCSC to BoS.

Meeting Details

Attendees

Kelley's Corner Steering Committee (KCSC)

Andy Brockway, Bob Van Meter, Dean Charter, Derrick Chin, Erin Bettez, Jon Benson (BoS Liaison), Larry Kenah, Peter Darlow

Town of Acton

- Kristen Guichard (Planning Department)
- John Mangiaratti (Town Manager)

Others

In addition to the people already listed, between ten and fifteen additional people attended the meeting.

Start and End Times

- The meeting started promptly at 7:30 pm.
- The meeting ended at 9:20 pm.

Supporting Documents

Kristen's Slides

Here is a link to the slides that Kristen used to guide the committee's discussion.

<http://doc.acton-ma.gov/dsweb/View/Collection-10376>

Link to MassDOT Comments on 25% Plan

This link locates the letter from MassDOT that describes the primary concerns about project costs and right-of-way impacts.

<http://doc.acton-ma.gov/dsweb/View/Collection-10316>

MassDOT Concerns

MassDOT listed four concerns in its letter to the town.

- Sidewalk material
- Hard scape buffer material
- Retaining wall on Route 111 east of CVS (both sides of the street)
- Pedestrian lighting

The word “decorative” in the first two items is telling.

Alternatives

Sidewalk Material

We looked at several materials that can be used to build sidewalks. We include brick and its cost to help set the scale. Costs are expressed in dollars per square yard.

- Brick – 275
- Asphalt (used all over town) – 35
- Concrete – 50
- Stained or colored concrete – 80
- Dyed concrete
- Exposed aggregate – 80

The range of costs points out the source of MassDOT's concern.

Discussion

The committee rejected asphalt. The committee also felt that uniform material through all of Kelley's Corner met cost concerns but supported other design goals for Kelley's Corner.

Recommendation

The committee's recommendation for sidewalk material was (uncolored) concrete.

Buffer Material

We also explored several approaches for buffer material. Buffer areas are the spaces between sidewalks and roadways.

The cost problem here is the same as the cost of sidewalk material. MassDOT again expresses its dislike of brick as either a sidewalk or buffer material.

Discussion

In addition to the choices listed for sidewalks themselves, we also examined two additional materials.

- Stamped Concrete (Faux Brick) – 150
- Stamped Concrete (Faux Cobblestone) – 140

While both of these materials are about half the cost of brick, they are also considerably more expensive than alternative sidewalk materials such as concrete. These two materials have an additional disadvantage in that they may not comply with ADA. The committee decided that increased costs (compared, for example, with concrete) and ADA issues argue against either stamped concrete alternative.

Recommendation

The following language is taken from a draft letter from Town of Acton to MassDOT. It simply expresses the conclusion that the committee reached at the end of this discussion.

“Alternative buffer materials where brick is currently shown in the plan could be grass, or a style of stamped decorative concrete, or another pervious material. Brick is still preferred in the buffer, but if necessary the Town is willing to pursue these other options.”

Retaining Walls

The current plans for Route 111 east of CVS call for retaining walls on both sides of the street.

The north side of the street, adjacent to the Roche Brothers parking lot, is at a lower level than the parking lot. On the south side of the street, the roadway falls off into a wetlands area.

Recommendation

The following language is also taken from a draft letter from Town of Acton to MassDOT. It simply expresses the conclusion that the committee reached at the end of this discussion. (The STA sections appear in Slides 22 to 24 in Kristen's slide set.)

The Committee supports

“… removing the buffer strip at STA 39+50 to STA 45+50 on the north and south side of Massachusetts Avenue, and moving the trees to the back of the sidewalk on the north side. This results in the elimination of the retaining wall on the north and south side of the roadway.”

Pedestrian Lighting

The current 25% plan calls for 145 “ornamental light poles” throughout the project area. MassDOT “only lights limited access highways and highway interchanges”. This means that the town must assume both initial and maintenance costs for so-called pedestrian lighting.

The approximate cost per light fixture was \$10k so that the overall cost for pedestrian lighting was \$1.45M.

Discussion

We explored several approaches to reducing the costs this lighting. All three approaches that we accepted involved reducing cost by reducing the number of lights.

- Reduce pedestrian lighting to the core area rather than the entire project area
- Increase the distance between lights
- Increase the height of the light poles

In fact, the second and third approaches must be combined to avoid “dark spots” in the otherwise lighted area.

We observed that, unlike the choices we faced with sidewalk or buffer material, these options can be combined to achieve an overall reduction in total cost.

Recommendation

We agreed that our approach for pedestrian lighting was to mix and match these three approaches so that the total number of light fixtures was reduced from 145 to 100.

The language that was used in the draft letter is as follows.

The Town will reduce the number of pedestrian light poles by either increasing the height from 12 feet to 15 feet, or reducing the total area covered, with a goal of reducing the number of light poles from 145 to 100.

Project Updates

There will be updates to the 25% plan. Here are two significant changes.

- There will be no signal at the Charter Road intersection with Route 111.
- There will be no signal at the intersection of Community Lane and Route 27. There will be a blinking pedestrian light at this crosswalk, similar to pedestrian lights located elsewhere in town including West Acton, in front of Town Hall, and at locations where the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail crosses roadways.

Dates for Next Steps

- The results of this meeting will be presented to the Board of Selectmen at their 15 October meeting.
- The town and GPI will meet with MassDOT on 22 October 2018.

Public Hearing

Andy Brockway tried to estimate the date for the public hearing on the 25% plan based on recent changes and the outcome from this meeting. The estimate is for a public meeting in early 2019.

Comments

Andy allowed a couple of questions and comments.

Danny Factor, speaking on behalf of the Commission on Disabilities, requested that we focus on keeping surfaces flat. He also requested that we continue to emphasize the need for adequate lighting.

Conclusion

The meeting adjourned at 9:20 pm.