

# Watertown Town Council

Committee on Public Works, Meeting April 20, 2016

Report: May 10, 2016

The Committee met at 7 pm in the Council Chambers. Present were: Committee Chair Aaron Dushku, Vice Chair Anthony Palomba, Secretary Susan Falkoff, Town Council President Mark Sideris, Town Councilors Lisa Feltner, Vincent Piccirilli and Kenneth Woodland, DPW Superintendent Gerald Mee, DPW Director of Administration and Finance Dennis Sheehan, Town Engineer Matt Shuman, DPW Clerk Mary Haley, DPW Consultant from World Tech Richard Benevento, School Facilities Manager Stephen Romanelli, School Committee Buildings & Grounds Committee Chair Elizabeth Yusem, Bicycle/Pedestrian Committee members Andy Campagna and Maria Saiz, and several members of the public. The complete attendance list is attached. Additional Worldtech staff was present but did not sign the sheet.

## **The purpose of the meeting was to present DPW's updated plans for lower Common Street.**

Councilor Palomba summarized the 5/14/2015 committee meeting on this issue. Concerns about bicycle and pedestrian safety were prominent. Mr. Shuman said that since then, two direct abutter meetings were held in June and July and the plan was revised in response to comments. The Bicycle/Pedestrian committee, the Council's Budget and Fiscal Oversight Committee, the School Committee Building and Grounds subcommittee and the new WPS facilities director have reviewed the revised plans and all support the concept plan.

Mr. Shuman gave a power point presentation ([linked](#)). He said that the Department had used a Complete Streets approach. Since the initial presentation, a bicycle lane was added in the northbound direction and "sharrows" (indicators that bicycles and cars share the lane) will be used for southbound travel. There has been improved driveway access and pedestrian crossings were consolidated to increase safety. The Spring and Common Street intersection was reconfigured to maximize usable green space.

Mr. Benevento highlighted some aspects of the changes. He said that the primary goal of the project is to enhance safety. The plan "organizes" the pedestrian and traffic activities. Morning and afternoon pickup at the high school is improved and street crossings are shortened and concentrated in one place. Pedestrians will be more visible to drivers; current blind spots at the intersection will be eliminated. On Common Street, in the vicinity of Bellevue Road, there will be radar speed signage. There will be a pedestrian activated rapid flashing beacon in front of the convenience store. Bicycle detection will be provided in the proposed new signal at the Spring Street and Common Street intersection. Mr. Mee added that the Department will consider additional parking restrictions on Marion Road near the Spring Street intersection. Several features will be added to improve safety on Columbia Road including a raised intersection, sidewalk bump-outs near the door on each side, and bollards in front of the door to clarify the dropoff and pickup area. At Katherine Road, there will be bump-outs with green space to narrow the crossing. Councilor Piccirilli suggested that the green space be added inside of the sidewalk instead of outside of it as pictured, to make plowing the street and sidewalk easier. The parking lot in front of the Phillips School could be re-configured, with details still to be determined in conjunction with the School Department -possibly as a later phase depending on WPS facilities and use planning that is currently underway.

Two interesting factoids we learned: it's against federal regulations to use sharrows in a roundabout, and there are specific requirements for designating "School Zones" such as serving students in grades K-8.

Both Maria Saiz of the Bicycle/Pedestrian committee and Elizabeth Yusem of the School Committee expressed enthusiastic support for the new plan.

Councilor Palomba asked about funding this \$1.9M project. Councilor Piccirilli said that half is in the CIP for FY17 as a loan order and the other half will be covered by Chapter 90 Funds. Councilor Palomba noted that this year's Chapter 90 fund allocation is only about \$775,000, but Mr. Mee said we have about \$3.5M road funds that have been held for pending projects, and some of that money will be applied to this project. Separate funds will be used for reconstruction of Katherine Road from Church to Common Street and for the Orchard Street extension; they are not part of this project. Councilor Dushku asked about stormwater management features. Mr. Shuman said that the plans are being reviewed as part of the Town's 604(b) stormwater planning grant for potential green infrastructure features. He also mentioned that the cost estimate for the project included an allowance for addition of stormwater Best Management Practices.

Mr. Gerald Missal of Robbins Road talked about safety concerns at Bellevue and wondered if the planned radar speed indicators will be sufficient to slow traffic at that point. He suggested a flashing light be added now. Mr. Mee said that this had previously been considered and there was some negative concerns, but he would revisit the issue and consider bringing it before the Traffic Commission, but that a detailed review of this intersection was not within the scope of this project. Mr. Shuman said that recent improvements to the intersection had actually reduced accidents in 2015 and 2016 from historical levels.

*Councilor Falkoff made a motion that this committee recommend that the Town Council ask the Department to go forward with implementing this plan for lower Common Street, with some minor modifications as discussed tonight and with additional minor tweaks at the discretion of the Department.*

The motion was approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,  
Susan Falkoff, Secretary