

**Town of Kent – Streetscape Committee  
Regular Meeting – September 8, 2018**

**Present:** John Casey, Rick Osborne, Catherine Bachrach, David Bain, Bruce Adams, Hedy Kinney,

The meeting was convened at 8:12 a.m. by John Casey, in Mike Everett's absence. The minutes of the August 11 meeting were approved on a motion by John Casey and second by David Bain and a second by Rick.

Planning and Zoning Meeting on September 13. The Streetscape Committee is on the agenda to make a presentation to Planning and Zoning on September 13. The discussion will be to establish that the committee's plans are consistent with the Town's Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) adopted in 2012. John Casey will put together a one-page sheet to accompany the FAQ document adopted earlier. The summary sheet will lay out all the options, with 'good, better and best' plans and will include the committee's recommendation that the project be done 'all at once and the right way.'

Discussion of bonding: It was noted that the debt for the KCS renovation will be retired in Fiscal 2021 (annual payment is \$476,513) and the firehouse debt will be retired in 2019 (annual payment of \$131,406). A USDA loan for \$3.5 million for the entire streetscape project at 3.5% for 40 years would total about \$162,704 per year.

Discussion of outreach It was agreed that the committee would recommend putting the plan summary and FAQ document on the Town website after the presentation to the Board of Selectmen. There was discussion of other vehicles for sharing information prior to a full town-wide meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 a.m. on a motion by David Bain.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Bachrach, Secretary

**These are draft minutes and the Streetscape Committee may make corrections at its subsequent meeting.  
Please refer to subsequent meeting minutes for possible corrections and approval of these minutes.**

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## **Town of Kent Streetscape Committee**

**Background of Committee and recommendations of the Town's Plan of Conservation and Development:** After the POCD was adopted in 2012, the Board of Selectmen formalized the Streetscape Committee, which had been meeting informally.

The POCD's "Vision for Kent" states that "The Kent Community will sustain and enhance its New England town character; encourage a diversity of people, housing and employment opportunities; ensure a healthy and safe living environment; and support the economic and cultural values of the village center." The Streetscape plan addresses many aspects of that vision.

One of the POCD's recommendations for immediate action was "to initiate a study of traffic, existing road conditions and improvement options on Route 7 through the Village Center...and request DOT consideration of improvements." The Streetscape Committee has been pursuing this goal since the adoption of the POCD. The POCD also includes the following recommendation: "Along with efforts to enhance the appearance of the Village, the Town should ensure that all sidewalks and public parking areas are maintained and improved to provide safe and convenient access throughout the Village."

**Why do we need sidewalk improvements?** It is the consensus of the committee that the following are critical needs:

- Address safety issues, provide conformity with ADA requirements and address the needs of elders and persons with mobility issues;
- Enhance maintenance and winter clearing of snow and ice;
- Unify the areas north and south of the railroad tracks as one cohesive unit;
- Improve all property values and the tax base throughout the entire town;
- Improve the local economy and the perception of our village.

**What are the current problems the project is designed to address?** The following is a partial list: the lack of curbs in many places and broken curbs elsewhere; inadequate crosswalks; cars and trucks parking on sidewalks; cracked sidewalks, drainage issues and pooling of water, creating dangerous and icy winter conditions; inconsistent surfaces and lighting deficiencies.

**What do sidewalk improvements accomplish for Kent residents and how do they help the Kent economy?** In the past twenty years Kent's village center has become the economic hub of the town, creating jobs and generating property and sales tax revenue which benefits all residents. Locally owned restaurants, stores and service businesses occupy the town's historic buildings, providing a variety of services.

The variety of restaurants and retail businesses serves local residents but has also helped Kent become a visitor destination. Activities benefitting local non-profits, such as the Kent Memorial Library's summer-long book sale, have also served as magnets for visitors to Kent. As with other elements of the town's infrastructure

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such as sewers, roads and schools, our sidewalks need periodic maintenance and

upgrading. Attractive, safe and adequately lit sidewalks throughout the village center will enhance Kent's reputation as vibrant and welcoming.

**What has the Streetscape Committee accomplished to date?** The State of Connecticut's fiscal issues delayed the approval of a Main Street Investment grant of \$500,000, which was granted last year. Since receiving a \$10,000 Main Streets Preservation of Place initial planning grant in 2013, the committee has accomplished the following:

- Worked with Milone & MacBroom Consultants to create plan options;
- Met with a variety of Connecticut DOT engineers and maintenance supervisors regarding plans and problem issues;
- Met with First Selectmen in nearby towns concerning their projects and visited towns with completed projects;
- Conducted three town meetings and incorporated changes in the proposed plan recommended by a majority of attendees;
- Met with Northwest Council of Government planners;
- Participated in a Road Safety Audit as part of a state-wide project.

**What can we expect during the construction project?** The recent DOT upgrade of sidewalk crossings to meet ADA standards was well-managed and of short duration. Our goal is to work with contractors to do the work in well-organized, short phases so there is minimal disruption and maximum safety.



**How much will it cost each household in Kent if the project is bonded?** One option to complete the entire project is through bonding after approval at a Town Meeting. We estimate the cost would be about \$80 a year for a home appraised at \$300,000.

**Why is it important to do the entire project now?** The \$500,000 grant must be used, costs increase with each year of delay and disruption to businesses and residents is minimized by completing the project all at once. This is an especially appropriate time to finance an infrastructure project because interest rates are near historic lows and town loans for the firehouse and Kent Center School improvements will be paid off within the next 24 months.

**The Kent Village Center is a symbol of the unique character of our town. When the town center is attractive and welcoming, people are likely to visit, boost our economy and may even want to raise a family here.**

**Streetscape Committee Members** Mike Everett, Chairman, Catherine Posselt Bachrach, David Bain, Jim Blackketter, John Casey, John Johnson, Hedy Kinney, Rick Osborne, Steve Wolf and Bruce Adams, ex-officio member.

Summer, 2018

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