

**TOWN OF MANCHESTER  
MINUTES OF PUBLIC HEARING  
HELD BY THE PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION/  
INLAND WETLANDS AND WATERCOURSES AGENCY  
APRIL 1, 2024**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

In Person: Eric Prause, Chairman  
Patrick Kennedy, Vice Chairman  
Michael Stebe, Secretary  
Daniela Luna  
Michael Farina  
Electronically: Teresa Ike

**ALTERNATE MEMBERS SITTING:**

In Person: Bonnie Potocki

**ABSENT:**

Chris Schoeneberger  
Maliha Ahsan  
Zachary Schurin

**ALSO PRESENT:**

In Person: Megan Pilla, Principal Development Planner  
Gary Anderson, Director of Planning & Economic  
Development  
Electronically: David Laiuppa, Environmental Planner/Wetlands  
Agent  
Nancy Martel, Recording Secretary

The Chairman opened the Public Hearing at 7:00 P.M. The Secretary read the legal notice when the call was made.

**PROPOSED SIDEWALK AND CURB PLAN 2024-2029 – Proposed amendments to the Town Sidewalk and Curb Plan**

Ms. Pilla presented the proposed Sidewalk and Curb Plan, referring to the ordinance that created it. The ordinance dictates the procedure for determining whether a developer needs to install sidewalks when building a new building on an undeveloped lot. That comes into play if such installation is in conformance with the sidewalk and curb plan as approved by the Town Planning and Zoning Commission.

Per the ordinance, the plan sets forth:

- The Commission is responsible for preparing and adopting the plan and updating it every five years.

- The plan shall set forth the policies for determining where sidewalks and curbs will be installed.
- Enumerates examples of what constitutes good cause for allowing or requiring payment in lieu of sidewalk installation.
- Before adoption, the plan shall be submitted to the Board of Directors for review and comment, which has been done.

Proposed Changes:

- Adding a “Purpose” section to clearly reference the ordinance that creates the sidewalk plan.
- There are several locations with assorted language revisions.
- Adding a section “Maps” to identify the two maps with the plan. The written documents and the plan go together.
  - o The Sidewalk Location Map is the map of existing and anticipated sidewalks along public streets.
  - o The Roadway Classification Map is a classification of all public streets by type, to be used in accordance with the policies outlined below for locating new sidewalks. This map is not proposed to change but is included in the plan because it is a reference for some of the criteria, including:
    - Table One – Minimum Standards for Sidewalks are based on the roadway classification (arterial street, collector street, local street, rural/scenic road).

Priority Streets

The list of priority streets for sidewalk installations is updated, which Ms. Pilla detailed. Several on the list have been partially completed. Ms. Pilla reported that, although these are the priority streets identified for sidewalks and extensions, the timing of projects is dependent on the availability of funds and other circumstances.

Removal of Sidewalks

Some of the language has been removed. Staff has agreed that, at this point, the Town doesn’t recommend sidewalk removals on the prior scale. On a case-by-case basis, it may be prudent to consider removals.

The new language was explained by Ms. Pilla.

Plan of Conservation and Development

There is an update to the refence to the Plan of Conservation and Development, as that has been updated.

Good Cause for Payment in Lieu of Installation

The language in the plan has been reworded and clarified.

## **Sidewalk Location Map**

Proposed Changes:

- Updating completed projects.
- Removing the category “Neighborhood Identified for Possible Sidewalk Removal Projects” from the legend.
- Strike the term “bike lane” in the legend, as they are “multi-use trails.”
- Remove any trails that are not adjacent to public streets.
- Remove connection between Redwood Road and Briarwood Drive, which is infeasible.
- Hartford Road is currently called out as bituminous trail, which will be changed to concrete sidewalk.
- Completed sidewalks need to be reflected as such.

## **Roadway Classification Map**

This map is not proposed to be changed.

After a question from Ms. Potocki, Mr. Jeff LaMalva, Town Engineer, stated that, to his knowledge, there are not any projects that would have any drainage implications for the MS-4 permit, though he will look into it. He added that there are no plans to rip up sidewalks to be in accordance with the MS-4 permit.

Ms. Pilla clarified that “disconnect impervious surfaces” is disconnecting from the Town storm water system and sidewalks generally do not contribute to the Town storm water system.

Ms. Luna asked about the priority street selection process, particularly related to Bush Hill Road. Mr. LaMalva explained that it is a rural scenic path. He reported that the priority list is in no particular order and is based on discussions with the Board of Education and e-mails the Town Engineering Department receives.

After a suggestion from Mr. Anderson, Mr. LaMalva detailed the types of sidewalk classifications. The classifications in the rural areas are to preserve the rural characteristics of the neighborhood.

Mr. Prause assumed that Tolland Turnpike is still on the list because there is still some work to be done, which Mr. LaMalva confirmed. One revision shown includes an off-road shared use path between Buckland Street and Chaplin Road.

After noting the number of projects that have been completed, Mr. Prause speculated that the list is too aggressive for a five-year plan. Mr. LaMalva stated that, in the past 8-10 years with the Complete Streets policy, most of the sidewalk gap filling done had been associated with that. They are not standalone sidewalk installation projects. New ARPA funding has been put toward sidewalk extensions.

Mr. Farina asked about the Redwood to Briarwood section and whether there is an easement, which was unknown. Noting Mr. LaMalva's comment on state funding for Tolland Turnpike, since it is in the future, he asked whether it should be taken off the list. Mr. LaMalva explained that it is not being removed, only relocated. Noting an area that had not been on the priority list, Mr. Farina asked how it was completed. Mr. LaMalva stated that it was on the map, just not identified as a priority in the plan, and gave a detailed explanation of the process.

Mr. Stebe proposed several language edits, which were discussed with Mr. LaMalva. He commented that a "crosswalk" is needed between the road rebuilding, the sidewalk and the Complete Streets to make it a complete loop. It needs to be stated that the sidewalks are part of a Complete Streets plan and should be and will be included in the rebuilding, repair and maintenance of the Town roads.

Mr. Prause asked whether this should be revisited in a couple of weeks, adding language and tweaking recommendations about taking away some of the sidewalk removal icons. Ms. Pilla agreed, though it could also be a modification to an approval.

Mr. Anderson observed that the conversation is not complete at this point, and as there are additional items, it may need to be brought back.

Ms. Potocki asked what dictates the location of the sidewalk, which Mr. LaMalva explained, noting that the classification of the road determines whether both sides of a street should have sidewalks. Mr. Anderson asked whether the Commission would like to add to the plan, which was agreed upon.

After an inquiry from Ms. Ike, Ms. Pilla explained the change from PWD to DPW.

Mr. Farina gave an overview of his policy document, which was prompted because of children who are forced to walk in the street to get to school. He reported:

School Walk Safety Policy – Prioritize arterial and collector roads within 1 and 1-1/2 mile from schools.

Last Mile Transportation Policy (in the POCD) – How bus stops fit into transit-oriented development in the Complete Streets policy.

Parks & Rec – Some children can walk to recreational facilities while others cannot, creating inequity.

Roadwork Construction – Taking DPW roadwork plans and creating the sidewalk plan accordingly.

Length of Time on Priority List – If something has been on the priority list for a long period of time, perhaps it should be elevated.

Street Pedestrian Lighting Policy

Implementation Policy – In the POCD, everything cannot be completed immediately, but the Commission should be making somewhat realistic recommendations.

Ms. Potocki stated that she is a proponent of linking the plan to Connecticut State Routes to School.

Mr. Kennedy speculated that the items in the document are likely considered by the Board of Directors and the DPW. He commented that a second document does not interact well with the actual plan. Fiscal decisions are the BOD's responsibility. The stated purpose of the Commission's document is in the capacity of approving subdivisions and whether to require sidewalks. If any edits are to be made, it should be within the context of the Commission's plan.

Mr. Farina noted that his goal is not to have two separate documents. He would like to see at least some of the policies he put together becoming a part of the Commission's sidewalk plan. It is his opinion that the Commission does not have the policies within the plan to the extent they could for prioritization. Mr. Farina added that he wrote the Street Pedestrian Lighting policy because it is on Page 69 of the POCD.

Ms. Luna agreed with Mr. Kennedy that the budget and what is allowed falls to the Board of Directors. She asked why it has taken so long to address items on the sidewalk plan and whether the Commission could add a timeline to the plan.

Ms. Pilla clarified that it is not the case that none of the priority extensions have been completed. There is one crossed off, a few that are not crossed off because there are gaps remaining, and at least one that has not been completed within the five-year period, but funding has been secured.

Mr. Stebe offered that there are many valid points, noting that the Commission is tasked with driving the planning and development within the Town of Manchester. A large part of the verbiage in the sidewalk plan has not been touched in three or four cycles of this revision. Striking the removal of sidewalks is the largest revision since he has been on the Commission. Other parts of the Town must look at the sidewalk plan for various uses. The Commission should include verbiage to link the sidewalk plan with other plans in existence.

Mr. Prause thanked Mr. Farina for drafting policies and felt the School Walk Safety, Last Mile Transportation and Parks & Rec policies could be directed options. It was his opinion that the Length of Time policy and the Implementation policy are hard for the Commission to dictate.

Ms. Pilla stated that staff did consider the POCD recommendation on pedestrian lighting and agreed with the intent of the POCD recommendation to include it in the sidewalk plan. However, the sidewalk plan may not be the appropriate place for it. Staff agrees with the draft policies but the reasons she did not recommend including them in the proposal are:

1. They do potentially encroach upon the decision-making processes of Public Works.
2. Although the ordinance states, "The plan shall set forth the policies for determining where sidewalks and curbs would be installed," it must be taken in the context of the

ordinance. The ordinance is for sidewalk and curb installation on existing streets simultaneous with building construction and is not directing the Commission to adopt policies outside of that realm. The Town Attorney's office strongly recommended against adopting any other policies outside the framework of the ordinance. They suggested that, if the Commission is inclined to consider adding the policies, the public hearing should be kept open so Attorney Tim O'Neil can join in the next meeting.

Ms. Pilla explained that they can include statements within the plan that refer to them, but to call it a policy is outside the framework of the ordinance that establishes this plan.

Mr. Prause sought clarification about sidewalk and curb installation on existing streets simultaneous with construction. It appears the policies referred to have to do with when a street is being constructed.

Ms. Pilla clarified that, when a new building or subdivision is being constructed, the plan must be referred to in order to determine whether the developer is responsible for installing sidewalks along the development.

Mr. Anderson added that there is a way to incorporate these ideas in the document, stating that these are the ways the streets on the plan will be prioritized. It could be stated that concepts and ideas come from the POCD, make a lot of sense, and are a way to modernize the way we think about sidewalks. There is not a lot missing from the plan at this time and the Commission should take a step back. Over the last 20 years, the Town (PZC, BOD and staff) has done an amazing job in implementing this sidewalk plan and connecting a lot of the gaps in the sidewalk network in town. It should be noted that a lot of progress has been made over the last couple of decades.

Mr. LaMalva stated that, after hearing a lot of these policies, it reminded him that, in 1990, the Public Works Department presented to the BOD on something for the sidewalk replacement program. There were 10 criteria and they physically assigned each segment a rating. It seems to him that it could be done for the sidewalk extensions using these criteria to develop the priorities.

Mr. Farina remarked that there is also state statute that clearly gives the Commission the authority to produce any map on sidewalks that they like with the priorities they want. He reiterated his belief that it is a good idea to have policies which answer many questions and read from his implementation policy. He pointed out that, on his road, the sidewalks were replaced, and currently they are being torn up.

Ms. Luna and Mr. LaMalva had a brief discussion about a particular sidewalk. Ms. Luna asked, if the policies can't be included in the sidewalk plan, whether they could be a recommendation to the BOD.

Mr. Anderson explained that there is a way to include the proposal for prioritization of sidewalks. The ideas in here are important, but some of the details are not within the PZC's purview and he suggested the members leave those to the DPW.

Ms. Potocki felt that this ordinance is antiquated. She felt the title should add redevelopment. The Commission could produce a list of evaluation criteria to be considered by DPW.

Mr. Kennedy observed that this is a specific application that arises under the specific ordinance and only the Board of Directors can pass a new ordinance. The Commission must act on what is before them.

Ms. Pilla noted that the current plan is valid through this month. If there is a delay, a gap of a couple of weeks is acceptable.

There were no members of the public to speak.

Mr. Prause noted that this will most likely be continued and produced a list of items to be addressed in the meantime, after which a discussion was undertaken. Mr. Anderson recommended mentioning Mr. Farina's policies in the beginning of the document or where sidewalk gap closures and expansions are discussed. Mr. Prause referred to comments regarding prioritization.

Mr. Kennedy commented that, if the Commission must get into prioritization, which he is dubious about given their jurisdiction, perhaps the plan should state "consider" regarding priorities. Anything more than that gets beyond the Commission's jurisdiction.

Mr. LaMalva stated that, based on the funding they have been receiving over the last 15-20 years, they are not selecting sidewalk projects. 90% of the sidewalk extension projects done are in conjunction with a road project. For others, they are chasing grants. Most of the funding opportunities are very specific. They are not missing out on grants because of lack of information in the plan or map.

Mr. Anderson remarked that staff needs more detail about how to incorporate the items Mr. Farina has mentioned. There should be some criteria in the document stating how decisions will be made. He asked whether the Commission wants staff to put something together. He asked if there is any input from the full Commission about how they envision it.

Mr. Prause would like to see the first three policies addressed. He was unsure about having rationale for all the different streets.

Ms. Pilla sought clarification because, if the Commission wants to call them policies, Attorney O'Neil would like to be here to discuss it.

Mr. Anderson suggested staff draft something that can be reviewed by the Town Attorney's office.

Mr. Prause suggested that the undercurrent of the discussion is that, when looking at the plan every five years, it is very similar to the prior lists.

**MOTION:** Mr. Stebe moved to continue the public hearing to April 15, 2024. Ms. Luna seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.

The public hearing was closed at 8:50 P.M.

I certify these minutes were adopted on the following date:

April 15, 2024  
Date

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Eric Prause, Chairman

**NOTICE: A DIGITAL RECORDING OF THIS PUBLIC HEARING CAN BE HEARD IN THE PLANNING DEPARTMENT.**