

The Community and Economic Development (C&ED) Committee met virtually on June 9th, 2020 to discuss the Center Street Modification Process.

Committee members present were myself (Aldерwoman Lisa Ryan- Chair), Aldermen Sharon Davis-VC, Chris Etti, Sam Goruso, and Michael Talbott.

Aldermen present were President Matt Whitcomb, Aldermen Paul Clifford, Tom Depoy, Rebecca Mattis, Melinda Humphrey, and Bill Gillam.

Others present were Executive Director (RRA) Brennan Duffy, Transportation Planner (RPC) Devon Neary, Executive Director (DRP) Steve Peters, Treasurer Mary Markowski, Building and Zoning Administer Tara Kelly, RCFD Chief Bill Lovett, DPW Commissioner Jeff Wennberg, and Gordon Dritschilo from the Rutland Herald.

The meeting started at 5:31pm.

Brennan opened the meeting with an overview of the proposed concept for Center Street. This concept would involve temporarily making Center Street one way and expanding seating for businesses and sidewalks for pedestrians by limiting/narrowing the roadway. Brennan stated that this has been a collaborative planning process that included Rutland Blooms, REDC, The MINT, DRP, and RPC.

Brennan talked about the different phases that this project would involve—from testing it out to short-term and long-term implementation.

Devon took us through the *Economic and Pedestrian Response to COVID-19: A Pilot Program for Center Street* packet. This detailed packet included information about challenges and opportunities, an executive summary, project partners, responsibilities, timeframe, budget, design elements, and examples. More specifically Devon talked about “parklets” and “street seats,” creating buffer zones with planters and delineators, crosswalks, curb extensions, and involving the art communities to beautify the streetscape. The speed limit would go down to 15mph and bicycle sharrows would be incorporated to encourage the use of slow traffic. Further, Devon said that this project concept is a “try before you buy” and that pilot studies are great for this. This project is being looked at as a whole.

Alderman Clifford asked Steve if the DRP has talked to all the businesses on Center Street and if they were on board. Steve stated that there have been overwhelmingly positive responses and that there are only a couple of businesses they need to check back in with.

Alderman Clifford also asked Commissioner Wennberg about the sewer odor and how/if it could be maintained with deodorant blocks. Commissioner Wennberg said that the fire department can maintain the basins and keeping them full would help reduce the odor. The deodorant blocks can help cut the odor, but he needs to look into it more.

Alderman Davis had some questions/concerns that she brought up. 1) As a Board, what can we do as soon as possible? 2) What thoughts does the fire department have regarding one-way traffic on center and the ability to get their trucks through? 3) She was nervous about spending \$18,000 for two months and was curious about what funding source the \$18,000 would come from. 4) Can parklets be reused? Brennan was optimistic and said that this project has the potential to be up and running before the 4th of July and the timeframe is critical. Brennan spoke with Chief Lovett and assured him that the trucks would be able fit and maintain one lane. Brennan also stated that many of the structures used for this project can be reused.

Alderman Gillam asked who will be responsible for making sure this project happens. Brennan said that the RRA would assume the role as the project leader, but a real collaborative effort from other partners, such as DRP, city fire and police, and the Rec department would be needed.

Alderman Etori was appreciative of Devon's hard work and wanted to make sure there was an opportunity to support restaurants and business owners who are not on Center Street but located in the downtown. Alderman Etori said that now was the time for the Board to get involved and help with marketing the Center Street Project. He said that the best-case scenario is we get back our RME and the worst-case scenario is that we tried something new and brought excitement to the downtown.

Alderman Mattis asked what the plan was for after the Summer and if there was a difference between temporary and permanency for structure and cost? Brennan responded that we would prove a concept and see how it works. If this is successful and the stakeholders want to see this pursued, we look at how we will fund it. For long term planning we would need to find significant funding, roughly one million dollars, through grants and transportation for things like moving the sidewalks, etc. Devon added that this pilot study will go into a formalized report that would benefit the future grant funding and therefore we would be looked at as a valued candidate for bigger spending sources.

Brennan stated that for the pilot study we might want to have a reasonable "not exceed number," and it might benefit to bump up the project from \$18,000 to \$20,000 to include funding for places that are not on Center Street. He also said the BIAP might be the appropriate funding source at this time, in addition to looking for all efficiencies and grants that are available this Summer that can be used to leverage some of project budget.

Alderman Davis made a motion to approve the Economic and Pedestrian Pilot Program for Center Street (and any other business in the downtown area that wishes to seek assistance under this program) and to fund the Program with an amount not to exceed \$20,000. The motion was seconded by Alderman Gorruso. Motion passed 5-0 and I so move.

The meeting adjourned at 6:24pm.