

Minutes are considered "DRAFT" until approved by committee at next meeting.

Minutes
Farmington Village Center Committee
January 24, 2019

Present

Bruce Charette Brian Connolly
John Renehan Portia Corbett
Kevin Ray Betty Coykendall
Elizabeth Sanford Portia Corbett
Sarah Jean Willett- Arrived at 6:10 p.m.

Staff

Kathy Eagen
Rose Ponte
Anna Savastano

Absent

Michael Gurski
Ruth Grobe
Nancy Nickerson

A. Call to Order

The Chair called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.

B. Public Comment

Jay Tulin, 39 Timberline Drive
Stressed the need for Universal Design and expressed that he hoped BSC Group will consider that in their planning process.

C. Minutes

1) To approve the attached January 10, 2019 minutes

Upon a motion made and seconded (Corbett/Sanford) it was unanimously VOTED: to approve the December 4, 2018 minutes. Sarah Jean Willett arrived after the vote occurred.

D. Reading of Communications and Written Appeals

1) Correspondence from Ruth Grobe regarding Universal Design.

Kathy Eagen explained that she spoke to Ruth Grobe and BSC Group regarding Mrs. Grobe's correspondence. She felt confident that BSC Group will be able to include Universal Design concept in the Streetscape Improvement Plan. A copy of Ruth's correspondence is recorded with these minutes as Attachment 1.

E. Presentation

1) Introduction of consultant- BSC Group

a. Kick-off Meeting

BSC's Landscape Architect, Jef Fasser and Vice President Kurt Prochorena introduced themselves to the committee. They apologized for not mentioning Universal Design in their initial interview. They

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stressed the importance of Universal Design and their familiarity with its implementation.

BSC gave each committee member an opportunity to introduce themselves and state their top priority for the streetscape improvements.

The Committee's top priorities included the following:

- To improve accessibility and pedestrian connectivity.
- To increase available parking.
- To improve Town-owned public spaces while maintaining Farmington's brand.
- To attract young people (25-35).
- To develop historic signage.
- To develop design guidelines that are tied to Farmington's Brand
- To make renovations, improvements and enhancements that are timeless, so they blend with the existing structures.
- To increase way finder signage that highlights Farmington's historic and cultural landmarks.
- Farmington Center should be unique and different from other parts of the Town.
- To make improvements to the Study Area that will reflect the distinct character of each location.
- To make the Village more welcoming to all.
- To have the consultants listen to what the members of the public want.
- To have consultants coordinate with stakeholders that have outstanding projects in the Study Area.
- To make a design that is able to be implemented and won't be "put on a shelf."
- To understand the needs of stakeholders. Farmington is not a one-size-fits all community, but styles should be consistent within each area.

Kathy Eagen stated that the design should be implemented in phases. This will allow for better budgeting and will keep the enthusiasm for this project. She also stated that it will be important to use resources that the Town already owns (i.e. Brownstone). The design must be simple and easy to maintain while also reflecting Farmington's brand.

BSC Group thanked the committee for their input and would like an opportunity to see the Brownstone inventory. They also inquired about when they should discuss available funding for the project.

BSC Group plans to review all the Study Area information that has been studied to date. They will meet with stakeholders that have active projects in the Study Area. Betty Coykendall and Portia Corbett offered to take BSC Group on a guided historical tour of the Village.

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BSC Group will be creating a project specific website that the public and committee members can access. Members of the public and committee members will have an opportunity to submit content to this website.

F. To schedule a Public Participation Meeting (Please bring your calendars.)

The next Committee Meeting will be held on Thursday, March 7, 2019 at 6:00pm. The first Community Meeting will be held on March 21, 2019 at 7:00pm. Locations for both meetings are still to be determined.

G. Other Business

Rose Ponte gave an update about the status of the Parsons Property. Kathy Eagen and Rose had a very positive meeting with Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Economic Development (DECD), David Kooris, on January 17, 2019. He explained that the last round of the Brownfield's Grant program did not have sufficient funding to address all the applications received. Farmington was not awarded a grant during this round of funding. Kathy Eagen said the biggest takeaway from the meeting is that David Kooris understands how to navigate the State's system. He stated that he will be able to assist the Town in setting up the necessary meetings with State agencies to further investigate whether to purchase the Parson's property. Rose and Kathy are hopeful that he will be able to assist us.

H. Public Comment

Jay Tulin, 39 Timberline Drive

He expressed that he was appreciative that BSC Group was going to consider Universal Design in their planning process.

I. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:46 p.m. (Sanford/Willett)

cc: Committee Members
Paula Ray, Town Clerk
BSC Group

Attachment 1

To: Members of the Farmington Village Center Committee
From: Ruth Grobe, Chair, Farmington Human Relations Commission
Re: Request regarding upcoming meeting with BSC
Date: 1/17/19

Dear Friends on the Village Center Committee,

I am writing to you because I will not be at our meeting next week with the representatives of BSC Group; for over a year, my husband and I have had tickets to go on a tour of the Galapagos Islands, and I cannot miss that. So I am writing to you as the person who tries to be a voice for the residents of Farmington who have limited mobility and who use wheelchairs. I wish I were going to be at our meeting because even though I voted for BSC Group as the overall best candidate, they were oblivious to the fine points of accessibility, and unfortunately, with accessibility the devil is in the details. My anxiety at missing the meeting is compounded by the absence of Bill Warner, who was a very knowledgeable and strong advocate.

Let me give you two concrete examples of the devilish details that may help you hold the BSC gentlemen's feet to the fire. When we redeveloped Unionville Center a number of years ago, I served on a committee similar to the Village Center Committee, and we worked with a landscape architect on the streetscape. The landscape architect thought that it would be aesthetically pleasing and historically appropriate to put strips of faux cobblestones at intervals along the sidewalk. At the time, I raised the issue of how the uneven surface might prove difficult for a sub-section of wheelchair users, and Town Engineer Matt Blume (who was always very supportive of accessibility concerns) assured me that the cobblestones were ADA compliant and would be fine. Years later, when Matt's daughter tragically ended up using a wheelchair, he told me what a hard time she had with maneuvering along the cobblestones in Unionville Center. Matt was a total expert in ADA regulations, but it took direct experience for him to see the whole picture.

To skip to the present, there is already a problem with the brand new sidewalk that the State DOT has installed along Route 4. Although at our Town government's request, the State has relocated a number of the wayfinding signs, there are still at least two that meet only the *minimal* ADA standard for the width of the pedestrian passage between the leg of the sign and the edge of the sidewalk. Since 2015, the US Access Board has been advocating for upgrades and changes in the ADA standards, including widening the rights of way along sidewalks to accommodate the much larger motorized wheelchairs and scooters that have been developed, but their recommendations have yet to be adopted by the Justice Department. With the signs that are impeding access on Route 4, all it would have taken to make the pedestrian right-of-way wider would have been to shift the location of the legs of each sign. This is what I mean by "the devil is in the details."

Knowledge of each little individual ADA "spec" is not enough. Universal Design is an approach that integrates and at times surpasses ADA standards into a comprehensive whole that will work for everybody. It has taken me years to develop the limited expertise that I presently possess, (my background is in social work and human rights, not engineering). I don't see how the BSC gentlemen can do it without some help, especially since they left accessibility out of their presentation altogether and were somewhat clueless when I asked my question.

Please don't let people with disabilities be the afterthought that they so often are. I believe that either BSC needs to add an expert in Universal Design to their team OR the Town needs to hire an expert to review plans and identify potential problems such as cobblestone strips (especially in the absence of Bill Warner). At the minimum, I am asking you to make the BSC representatives aware that Universal Design principles are a priority for us. Thank you very much for considering this request.



UNIVERSAL DESIGN: A FOUNDATION FOR OPTIMAL ACCESS

What is universal design...inclusive design...design-for-all?

...a **framework** for the design of places, things, information, communication and policy that focuses on the user, on the widest range of people operating in the widest range of situations without special or separate design.

Or, more simply: Human-Centered design (of everything) with everyone in mind.

Universal Design Principles:

Equitable Use: The design does not disadvantage or stigmatize any group of users.

Flexibility in Use: The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.

Simple, Intuitive Use: Use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the user's experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level.

Perceptible Information: The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory abilities.

Tolerance for Error: The design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions.

Low Physical Effort: The design can be used efficiently and comfortably, and with a minimum of fatigue.

Size and Space for Approach & Use: Appropriate size and space is provided for approach, reach, manipulation, and use, regardless of the user's body size, posture, or mobility.

[Developed by a group of US designers and design educators from five organizations in 1997. Principles are copyrighted to the Center for Universal Design, School of Design, State University of North Carolina at Raleigh. The Principles are in use internationally.]



Relationship between Legally Mandated Accessibility & Universal Design

Within a civil or human rights context, legally mandated requirements for accessible design, and in particular the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), provide a vital basis for autonomy and equal opportunity for people with disabilities. To be effective, legal mandates require an infrastructure of information and enforcement in order to ensure meaningful compliance. Inevitably, the legal mandates establish a set of minimum standards for some built, information and communications environments and address the needs of people with some types of functional limitations, but not all. Too often those minimum standards are understood as maximums. Importantly, the requirements are not flexible enough to easily reflect advances in technology.

Accessibility is focused on people with disabilities, especially those who are 'qualified' as defined in the law. The design standards for accessible design focus primarily on accommodating the needs of wheelchair users and, to a lesser extent, people who are blind and hearing impaired. Though wheelchair users are relatively small in number, their wheeled devices make very clear demands on the built environment; and design features that make it possible to wheelchair users to participate equally benefit the much larger number of people who have difficulty walking. Additional requirements for "effective communication" also require taking at least minimum steps to provide for alternative means of communication through auxiliary aids and services, again reflecting advances in technology.

Accessibility laws and state codes on accessibility are a limited indicator of the potential of design to facilitate independence, participation and wellbeing for the disabled, a growing minority population. In a world in which we live 30 years longer than people did 100 years ago surviving illness and injury at record rates, most of us will experience at least periods of functional limitation in the course of our lives. It is not about "special" anymore.

Universal or inclusive design starts with accessible design and calls for a more creative and imaginative engagement of designers to design places, products and technology that will work seamlessly for the widest possible group of potential users. The goal is to eliminate disabling environments (physical, information, communication, social and policy environments) in favor of enabling ones for everyone.

Contact the Citizens Coalition For Equal Access (CC=A):

Keith Mullinar, Co-Chair: 860-298-7915

mullinar@att.net

Ruth Grobe, Secretary: 860-604-8755

ruthgrobe@gmail.com