

To: Delaware Avenue Hamlet Enhancement Study Advisory Committee  
Study Advisory Committee Meeting #5 – June 8, 2010  
From: Margaret Irwin, River Street Planning  
Date: June 15, 2010  
Re: Meeting Minutes for SAC Meeting #5

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*Attendees:*

Sam Messina, Town Supervisor  
Mark Kelly  
Barbara Ostroff  
Steve Buldoc  
Henry Peyrebrune  
Dianne Barber Kansas  
Virginia Acquario  
Michael Morelli, Director Economic Development & Planning, Town of Bethlehem  
Robert Leslie, AICP, Senior Planner, Town of Bethlehem  
Leslie Lombardo, Albany County  
Carrie Ward, CDTA  
Michael Wyatt, NYSDOT  
Todd Fabozzi, CDRPC  
Robert Horn  
David Jukins, CDTC  
Anne Benware, CDTC  
Jen Ceponis, CDTC  
Margaret Irwin, Principal, River Street Planning  
Leila Jabour, AICP, Principal Planner, River Street Planning  
George Leveille, Chairman, Town Planning Board

The meeting opened with remarks by Mike Morelli and Sam Messina, Town Supervisor who thanked everyone for their participation and work on the Delaware Avenue Project.

**Transportation Improvement Plan - Document Review**

Margaret Irwin asked for comments on the Transportation Improvement Plan. The following comments were provided by the Steering Committee:

1. Page 8- The Town should plan to engage or attend the Business Forum with Chamber to share and discuss the vision statement. Consider revising the statement to include the phrase “viable businesses” as part of the statement.
2. Page 14 - Correct missing number in item 3.
3. Page 16 – What can be done to increase enforcement of pedestrian laws? There should be more community education. Following the meeting Bob talked to the

Deputy Police Chief regarding fines/points for failure for driver to yield to pedestrians in crosswalks, and he provided the following information (see email

The applicable sections of the NYS Vehicles & Traffic Law, relating to pedestrians are attached to this e-mail.

Section 1151(a) applies to vehicles yielding to pedestrians within a crosswalk.

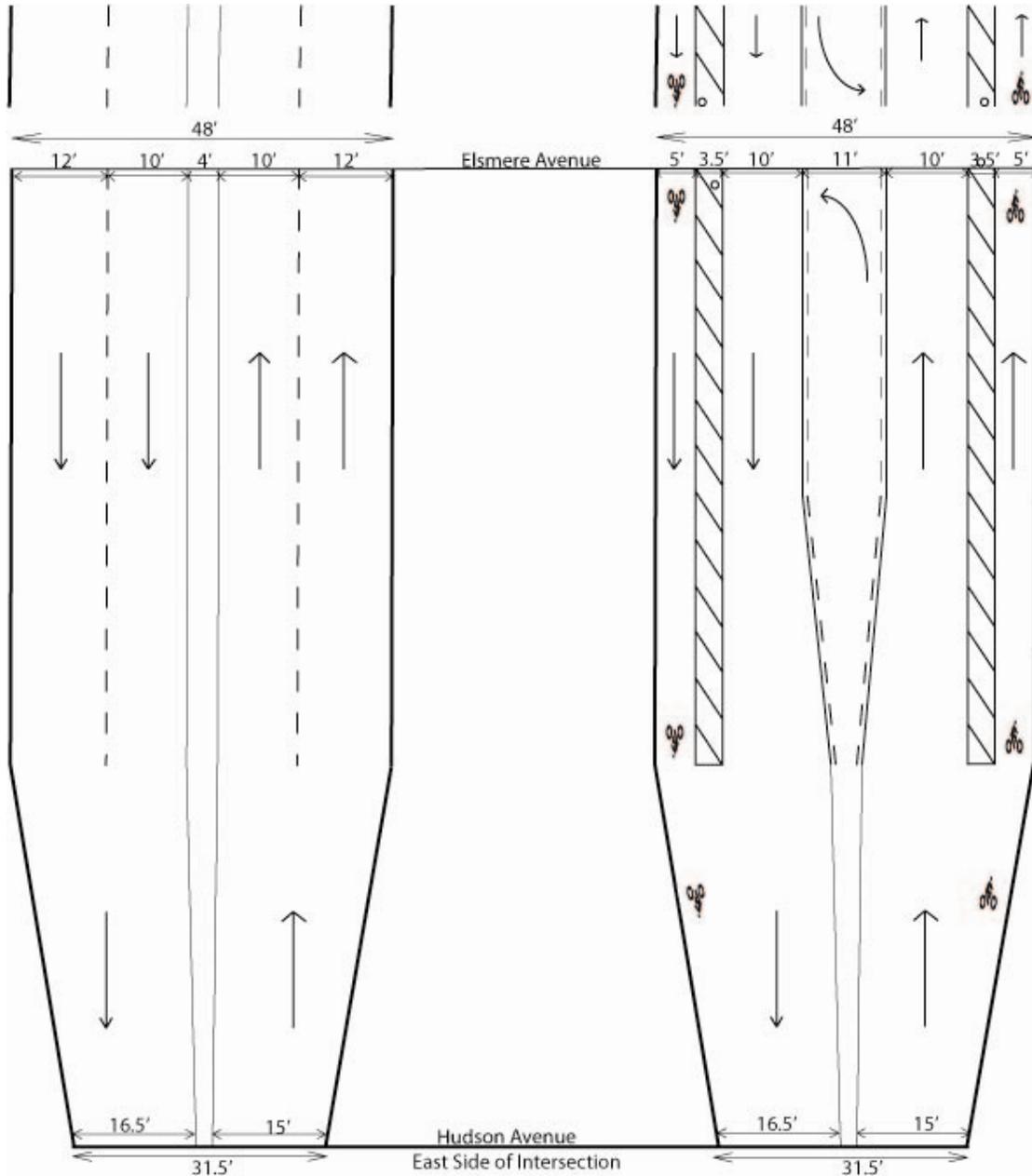
Regarding fines/ points, the Magill's Vehicle and Traffic Law Manual (which the Town uses) outlines the following for violations of Section 1151(a):

	Minimum Fine	Maximum Fine	Minimum Jail time	Maximum Jail time	Points	Town Court Surcharge
First Offense	\$0	\$150.00	0 days	15 days	3	\$85.00
2nd Offense within 18 months	\$0	\$300.00	0 days	45 days	3	\$85.00
3rd Offense within 18 months	\$0	\$450.00	0 days	90 days	3	\$85.00

4. Page 17 – Item b. should refer to the need to develop standards/recommend distance (between markings) and location within lane of the sharrow
5. Page 24 – 1<sup>st</sup> bullet address rear “or sides. There was a suggestion to review Item 1 and see if it is requiring too much.
6. Page 34 – Item 2. Observation that the most up to date controllers are already in place. It might be possible to change preferences or timing, but it is not a question of upgrading controller. CDTC will follow up with NYSDOT
7. Page 34 - Item b. – CDTC confirmed that the image is allowed under MUTCD.
8. Page 39- Item a. - CDTC will talk to NYSDOT about options at Elsmere and Delaware to determine if they are acceptable to the agency. At Delaware and Elsmere it was determined that adding an “all-red phase” would likely cause excessive vehicle delay. A pedestrian confirmation button should be considered.

9. Page 50 – The committee decided to remove Figure 27
10. Page 52 - SAC asked that Figure 29 be adjusted to not show on-street parking. It was decided that we should show above ground utilities so as to make the changes feel feasible over the shorter term. It was suggested that we could show light arms on poles or decorative style/freestyle lamps. Committee members wondered if there are any utility company sponsored Streetscape Improvement program?
11. Discussed the Kenwood/Delaware and Adams/Kenwood intersections. Specific improvement comments
  - a. From a pedestrian standpoint it would be good to eliminate free turning right “slip lane” to extend feel of the 4 Corners. Curb lines could also be extended.
  - b. The radius at the intersections is not optimal and sight lanes out of Adams onto Kenwood are very limited by trees near the school and shrubs near church.
  - c. The SAC discussed lack of enforcement to protect pedestrians in crosswalks. Can the Town post signs saying what the fine is if you get a ticket as a deterrent? Can someone talk to Chief of Police? Increase fees? Conclusion is that more enforcement would make a big difference. (See above and attached regulations)
  - d. Consider reconfiguration of the intersection to prevent right turns. Would a slip-ramp with a yield sign help? CDTC will talk with Mark Kennedy at NYSDOT)
12. The SAC discussed the Hudson Avenue to Elsmere Road diet (Page 53). Some committee members found it confusing. The report contained the evaluation memo from DOT but, based upon prior discussion did not make specific recommendations about what the Town should do. Sense of the committee is that we should discuss the ideas further with DOT and include recommendations in the report. It would help to include the lane diagram included in prior drafts (it is included below). DOT commented that the west bound road diet makes a lot of sense.
  - a. If DOT is suggesting two lanes toward Albany (cross-section on 52) - what's going to happen at Hudson and at Elsmere? Should there be a road diet to Normanskill Bridge? SAC members commented that it may be a perfect example of how a road diet could improve the pedestrian realm. Please explain the model road diet DOT was suggesting. Coming out of the underpass and towards Elsmere into the “model” described by DOT shows 2 lanes. Committee members did not understand how that would work. Traffic Dept. says that if we built as one lane in each direction with center turn lane it seems that traffic in peak hours would queue up beyond the

railroad bridge, which would be unacceptable, resulting in the suggestion for 2 lanes eastbound. But its complicated with one lane of traffic in each direction going under the railroad underpass feeding out into 2 lanes. Would this create a problem with the signal in the model? -



- b. A question was raised about the cross section on Page 52 regarding what happens at Hudson under a road diet. Clarification that it would stay the same.
- c. It was observed that this linkage study is for one piece of the roadway and evaluating options east of Elsmere Avenue is beyond the current scope.

- d. SAC suggested that we consider a roundabout at the intersection with CVS to possibly get rid of more lanes. Some members felt that a roundabout may be the best opportunity for the road diet. Some concern was raised regarding the size the roundabout would need to be. The small roundabouts in Manchester, Vermont were identified as an example of a small roundabout. Other SAC members wondered how a roundabout would work for businesses and schools located there? Finally it was observed that a roundabout doesn't feel like "hamlet"
  - e. There is still congestion at 4PM-approximately 16,000 vehicles a day. It was observed that there are not many alternatives other than to add lanes, but that would negatively effect pedestrian and bicycling environment. The closer we get to the city end, the more traffic has to be accommodated. Need to accept that Elsmere feeds a lot of traffic. We also need to think about school children who walk and ride bicycles in heavy traffic
  - f. There was a discussion about speed limits. Could the speed limit be dropped to 30 mph from the D&H overpass to the 4 Corners? It was observed that the speed limit increases to 35 mph at Hudson and 40 mph at Elsmere.
13. Changes to Appendix I - Circulation Plan were described. To clarify the Bike Route it was suggested that Adams Street be shown as green and purple as well as a pedestrian route.
14. We should look at the previous recommendations in older DOT plan for wider shoulders to accommodate bicycles
15. Remove the suggestion about a new street through the bank parking lot
16. Albany County commented that recommendations to rail trail are all goo. County recognizes this will be phased in one site plan at a time
17. Oakwood connection – mentioned in a couple of locations (page 20, on the map in appendix and on page 36 The intersection of Oakwood and Delaware is not optimal. Committee members questioned the suggestion/ encouragement of bicycle and pedestrian use on Oakwood as a connection to the rail trail especially with middle schoolers using the route unless there are improvements at the corner. Given that there are gas stations there, how would we close it off?
18. NYSDOT will consult internally and see if they can offer any suggestions to connect Booth and Elsmere, despite the steep grade.

19. There was some discussion of a conceptual project being discussed for Booth and Elsmere (Old CVS site) for a mixed use pharmacy and professional office. Concern was raised that extra employees and shoppers would increase traffic, but it could also be a way to support transit. Members suggested adding a transit shelter as part of site redevelopment.

### **Streetscape and Hamlet Design Guidelines – Document Review**

Margaret Irwin asked for comments on the Streetscape and Hamlet Design Guidelines. It was noted that new photos will be included in the final draft and that the Town has reviewed and accepted the draft. The following comments were provided by the Steering Committee:

1. Could crosswalks be school colors? It was noted that the Town has three school districts and that might be tricky.
2. Page 9 - The reuse of the Shoe Depot was discussed. Should this area be rezoned from commercial hamlet to hamlet to maintain the integrity of Elsmere? Adaptive reuse of existing structure was preferred over new development. Another suggestion was that the Town purchase the property and make it a Park.
3. Some SAC members liked the layout showing existing regulations and then new suggestions.
4. A member suggested that if we create an overlay the standards can be built into the regulation for the overlay and would not need to be a separate article. one thought set upon overlay district-guidelines not mandatory
5. Visitor George Leveille asked that the committee give them standards that say what must be done rather than guidelines subject to interpretation. Steve Buldoc (committee member and local developer) confirmed that he would rather know the rules upfront.
6. Should sidewalks be required rather than encouraged
7. If there is agreement on specific items they should be included as standards, leaving the rest as guidelines. One member suggested a transition period where there would be flexibility in compliance.
8. Page 42 – In the discussion of non-conforming signs we should consider what's critical to be standards. It was recommended that language regarding non-conforming signs be added to general zoning law outside of the hamlet.\

9. It was suggested that the following information be included:

### **Background**

In (year) the Bethlehem Town Board recognized and agreed to address certain problems in the chosen study area of Delaware Avenue from the Four Corners to Elsmere Elementary School. Accordingly a sum of money was appropriated to engage consultants to conduct a study of the area in collaboration with the Capital District Transportation Committee (CDTC) and NYSDOT. Delaware Ave is a state highway within the purview of NYSDOT. The firms of River Street Planning & Development, LLC, Nelson/Nygaard and CLA Site were chosen for their expertise in this urban planning area. Also a Citizens Advisory Committee was appointed to aid with the membes and are listed in Appendix. The study work began on [month and year].

### **The Analytic Process**

Initially, aerial photos and highway maps of the study area were obtained along with information from property and tax maps to develop a profile and photo of each property. All affected property owners were notified of the study and invited to take an active role in its progress. NYSDOT provided traffic flow information along with accident data. Two or more walking tours of the study were conducted to note problem areas and look for opportunities for improvements. X number of meetings were held with property owners, consultants, and citizen advisors to obtain input to the planning process.

### **Problem (issues) identified:**

1. Accident prone traffic hazards exist at the intersection at the Four Corners, Elsmere Ave and Hudson Ave
2. Standard 4-5 foot concrete sidewalks are missing in several areas thus inhibiting east pedestrian usage. Also, lack of curbing allows parking vehicles to encroach on sidewalk areas.
3. Curb cuts are too wide in various locations thus creating confusion as to actual entry point, particularly at commercial sites.
4. On-street delivery truck unloading occurs at the Four Corners in a moving traffic lane, impeding traffic flow.
5. Several dumpsters and trash bins are exposed without any screening
6. The area contains a hodgepodge of 2-story, vernacular, modern and Victorian architectural styles, in various states of repair, with many former residences converted to business/to commercial use with few distinguishing features. A lack of cohesiveness exists.
7. There is an ad-mixture of uses, ranging from gas stations to banks to commercial/businesses, convenience stores, an auto repair garage, pharmacies, an elementary schools, cafes, specialty shops, etc.
8. There is a plethora of utility poles and overhead wires, adding to the visual cluster.

9. Street trees are missing in several areas adding to bareness. Landscaping designs at each property vary widely as well as do maintenance levels of those features
10. Business signs vary considerably in design, size, color, height, etc. at variation with present day zoning codes which advocate so-called low-profile "monument" designs.
11. Except for the clock/pocket park at four corners and the Veterans Memorial Park there is a lack of gathering places, especially for students after school lets out
12. The former D&H Railroad overpass is visually unattractive, in poor condition and has the potential to become an attractive "Gateway" feature along Delaware Ave in conjunction with future rail trail improvements
13. There is a lack of continuity with street lighting fixtures
14. The 40 mph speed limit encourages 45 to 50 mph traffic flow which may be excessive

It was suggested that text be added explaining the issues above and consider deleting the old photos of the Four Corners and elsewhere.

### **Next Steps**

- There was a long discussion and decision to review the document and reformat it as a set of standards and a set of standards rather than leaving it combined. It was decided that the committee would review the current draft guidelines and decide which should be required as standards.
- The next committee meeting will be on Wednesday, June 30<sup>th</sup> at 2PM to review design guidelines vs. standards.
- Schedule the next public workshop for September 2010.