



**TOWN OF MIDDLEBURY**  
**Planning & Zoning Office**  
**77 Main Street**  
**Middlebury, Vermont**  
**(802) 388-8100 X 210**

### MEMORANDUM

TO: Selectboard  
FROM: Jennifer Murray, Director of Planning & Zoning  
CC: Planning Commission, Design Advisory Committee  
DATE: 11/13/2018  
SUBJECT: Planning Commission review of Triangle Park Printer's Alley Plans

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The Planning Commission (PC) invited Community Liaison Jim Gish to their November 1<sup>st</sup> meeting to present plans for Triangle Park and Printer's Alley. See attached minutes from that meeting.

Overall, the PC felt the plans need to be considered in the broader context of the surrounding area, ensuring that these parks will connect to other green spaces (e.g. Riverside Park, Town Green) and the existing transportation network (e.g. Merchant's Row, Main Street, bike-ped connections).

The Planning Commission had the following comments about process:

- 1) Jim explained that because of schedule constraints, the summer meeting was canceled. There were no advertised opportunities for public engagement between the first meeting in June and the second meeting in September, nor were plans made available for review when requested. Nov 1 was the first time the PC was directly engaged in the design process. As such, the PC feels this process should not be fast-tracked at the end, as it is not right to deny the community of the opportunity to provide meaningful public input.
- 2) Designing public space is an iterative process requiring regular opportunities for the public to check-in on the development of the final design. As such, the PC recommends at least one more public meeting before presentation of final designs to the Selectboard.
- 3) The PC and DAC are staffed by the Town Planner. Given adequate time, we would be happy to assist in reviewing future iterations of these plans, providing recommendations in an advisory capacity. (Note- the final selected design will also require approval by the Development Review Board (DRB) as required by zoning. This must be scheduled at least a month in advance.)
- 4) The PC feels that understanding what the State is willing to pay for in terms of amenities is important to setting appropriate expectations for the final design.

Thank you!

**Town of Middlebury Planning Commission (MPC)**  
**Rotary Small Meeting Room, First Floor**  
**77 Main Street, Municipal Offices**  
**Minutes of November 1, 2018**  
**Draft**

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**Members Present:** Barbara Saunders, Chair, Todd Desabrais, Sam Ostrow, Sarah Peluso, Chris Robbins, Lucy Schumer and Steve Terry

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**Members Absent:**

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**Staff Present:** Jennifer Murray, Dave Wetmore

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**Others Present:** Jim Gish, Nancy Malcolm and Natalie Peters

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8 **1. Call to Order:** Barbara called the meeting to order at 12:10 pm.

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10 **2. Public Comment and adjustments to agenda:**

11 No public comment or changes to agenda

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13 **3. Minutes:**

14 Review of 10/18/2018 minutes- On a motion by Steve, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Sam, the PC voted to approve  
15 the minutes of 10/18/2018 as submitted with a minor correction on line #50. Motion passed  
16 6- yes, 0-no and Sarah abstained.

17  
18 **4. Presentation by Jim Gish -Triangle Park and Printers Alley restoration plans**

19 Jim Gish, Middlebury's Bridge and Rail Project Community Liaison, began by giving the PC  
20 some background on the park projects.

21  
22 Background- All property involving Triangle Park and Printer Alley has been transferred to the  
23 Town. The exception is a 6-ft strip of land next to the National Bank in Printers Alley. The  
24 State is obligated to restore these areas to the pre-construction conditions. In the case of  
25 Printer Alley, "pre-existing condition" may not be desirable or even possible. The State  
26 contracted with VHB and Landworks to develop a landscape plan for these Park areas. The  
27 Plan and renderings before us today are the result of a public meeting held in June. The  
28 second planned public meeting did not take place. Instead VHB and Landworks presented  
29 these plans in September based only on the input from June. There are still questions of who  
30 will pay for what. The State seems committed to paying for "amenities". However,  
31 "amenities" have yet to be clearly defined and that needs to be established before a final plan  
32 for the Parks can be determined.

33  
34 Jim shared that the Ashlar Blocks lining the west side of the existing tunnel are historic and  
35 will be salvaged and used elsewhere. These blocks are circa 1840 and line the walls of both  
36 tunnels under Main Street and Merchants Row. Some of the blocks will be used in the Park  
37 restoration projects.

38  
39 Triangle Park- Jim reviewed the 2 plans for the Park, noting that the renderings are not  
40 realistic. There seemed to be mixed ideas whether the fountain should remain. Jim stated  
41 that the fountain is historic and will remain somewhere in the Park. Comments from the SB

42 meeting suggested that there need to be more seating spaces/hardscaped areas that can be  
43 used as a flexible gathering space. Fountain placement as a focal point limits the mixed use  
44 opportunities for this space. Many questions still exist- how can this space contribute to  
45 economic development of the Downtown area? Is gathering space supported by downtown  
46 businesses? Nancy Malcolm expressed that Better Middlebury Partnership supports  
47 expanding gathering space opportunities. Jim noted the Selectboard recently approved  
48 Merchants Row as one-way traffic. With that decided, the Battell Block sidewalk will be  
49 widened, making it more pedestrian friendly. There will be approx. 45 parking spaces on  
50 Merchants Row. Jim reiterated that this is not the final Plan. Jennifer reiterated her request  
51 for trees or tree wells in the widened sidewalk area along Merchant's Row. Landworks is  
52 closing and VHB is working to create a new design based on meeting with Selectboard. VHB's  
53 Mark Hamlin will take the lead. The plan will incorporate hardscape and green space. The PC  
54 observed that hardscape does not have to be pavement or concrete.

55  
56 Printer's Alley- Printer's Alley will remain open to one-way traffic. The present Plans were not  
57 well received and the PC noted that the idea of a gathering/events space in this Park seems  
58 impractical. Nancy observed that space was visualized in the past as connecting to the  
59 riverside park. PC members agreed- why would you have lunch there if you could have lunch  
60 overlooking the falls? The PC liked the idea of using Printer's Alley as a "green corridor",  
61 perhaps with an organic path and trees- a place for pedestrians to safely cross to the river and  
62 also take a break from the street. The Park's elevation changes 11-ft over a very short  
63 distance, making compliance with ADA rules virtually impossible. PC observed that this space  
64 needs to demonstrate a sense of security for pedestrians, separating pedestrians from  
65 vehicular traffic. PC suggested that this Park should be kept simple, possibly using the ashlar  
66 blocks and landscaping to define spaces and transitions from Main Street to Marbleworks.  
67 The PC suggested the Ashlar blocks could be used along the National Bank of Middlebury  
68 building between the sidewalk and the proposed vehicular lane.

69  
70 PC observed that both Plans lack context to their surrounding area, where/what are the  
71 connections we want to make? This is critical since Triangle Park will be contiguous to St.  
72 Stephens Church and the Town Green Park, and will provide critical connections to other  
73 areas of Town. The Planning Commission has not been involved by the design team in the  
74 process, and design team's process of undocumented engagement with selected individual  
75 stakeholders has not been very transparent. Nancy stated the PC should have been leading  
76 the process. The PC pointed out that developing design plans is an iterative process requiring  
77 regular opportunities for the public to check-in on the plans. The PC feels this process should  
78 not be fast-tracked, as it is not right to deny the community of the opportunity to provide  
79 meaningful input. Specifically, the PC urged Jim to design an engagement process that  
80 involves at least one more public meeting before presenting to the Selectboard.

81  
82 PC noted that Jim has been the liaison between the Town and VTrans/VHB. Jim was asked to  
83 encourage the design team to use the Planning Commission as an advisory group. Jim  
84 expressed that VHB seems mainly interested in only working directly with the Selectboard. PC  
85 thanked Jim for his time and hopes that he will communicate the PC's sentiments.

87 PC decided that a letter be sent to the Selectboard expressing the PC's concerns including the  
88 importance that designs demonstrate cohesiveness between the Parks and Merchant Row.  
89 Natalie noted the Design Advisory Committee is also good design resource which has not  
90 been engaged as part of the process and would co-sign letter as well. Staff will work on  
91 drafting a document for them to review.  
92

93 **5. Rail Platform Project-**

94 Jen shared a memo and Summary Matrix of the Planning Commission's analysis of alternative  
95 locations for the Rail Platform. PC thought the summary was extremely easy to follow and  
96 accurately represented the PC's work and conclusions. The PC recommendation to the  
97 Selectboard will be part of their agenda on November 27<sup>th</sup> meeting. The Infrastructure  
98 Committee will review on November 8th.  
99

100 **Sam moved to present the draft Memo and matrix outlining the Planning Commission's**  
101 **recommendation on the preferred location for the Amtrak Rail Platform to the Selectboard.**  
102 **Sarah 2nds.**  
103

104 **Motion passed 7-yes and 0-no.**  
105

106 **6. Other Business:**  
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108 **Next meeting of PC- November 15, 2018**  
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110 **7. Adjournment:** Meeting concluded at 1:35.  
111

112 Submitted by: Jennifer Murray