



Meeting Notes

Place: Boys & Girls Club Auburn, Maine

Meeting Date: January 7, 2016

Notes Taken by: Meghan Houdlette, VHB

Project #: 52402.00

Re: **New Auburn Riverway and Greenway**
Initial Public Meeting

ATTENDEES

<u>City of Auburn</u>	Mayor Jonathan P. LaBonté	<u>VHB</u>	<u>COPLON ASSOCIATES</u>	<u>General Public from New Auburn</u>
Doug Greene	City Councilors- Leroy Walker	Greg Bakos	Sam Coplon	
Eric Cousens	Andrew Titus	Meghan Houdlette	Chris Cannon	

Introductions & Meeting Purpose,

Project Overview Presentation:

- Doug Greene provided an introduction and described the meeting purpose, and Greg Bakos provided an overview of the project through a slide presentation which also referenced the previous studies. The presentation included a draft Purpose & Need Statement, and it discussed the scope of the project as well as the context, which includes the City's proposed form based code.
- Sam Coplon described landscape architecture opportunities, including recreational examples.
- Eric Cousens provided an overview of the economic development goals and background. He presented the importance of tax revenues increasing with increasing property values to assist in redeveloping this village.

Breakout Session – Vision, Issues and Opportunities

- Greg kicked off the public input session with the question: Try to describe your ideal vision for the future New Auburn Village Riverway and Greenaway. *Responses:*
 - Need to clean up Newbury Street area first (VHB response: not in this project scope)
 - Dee Chapman/All about you salon - Connect with Riverwalk activities like the balloon event. Would be good to be able to park and walk across a ped bridge to events, we need to connect it all. Could have events like the Dempsey challenge in that area of the Riverwalk. Connect business people with a place to eat lunch outside along the river. Difficult to park in New Auburn because the lighting is terrible to walk from parking to destination. Customers could park further away but it needs to be safer.
 - Jane Crosgrow - want access to river, use Barker Mill Trail. The area needs a place to eat and look over the water like Pats and Grittys or a concession café. A place to watch the balloon festival.
 - Tizz Crowley – lives in Auburn, enthusiast about New Auburn need more gathering places that are reasonably priced and fit 180 people. Doesn't exist citywide. Thinks the process should engage all of

Auburn not just New Auburn. Need to incorporate and invite entire city. It's about quality of life in Auburn.

- Andie Hanson – Boys and Girls Club Director, would be great to have education incorporated to show history of river and working mills preservation of rivers. Plaques describing history for schools and visitors use as education.
- Chris C. – There are two competing interests: high end housing vs. people hanging out using the space recreationally. Everything happens in Lewiston now, balloon festival, ice sculptures, etc. concerned the green space isn't large enough. Would love space outside for theater and other events to happen.
- Greg – offered up the idea of closing off the roadway during events, make it shared / flexible space since space is at a premium.
- Theater enthusiast – that's good but parking lot is like a prison where it is located. Need a venue for outdoor theater, Lewiston has one.
- Mike C. – steep slope to river space is more linear, river is backyard. Want as much open usable space as possible, it's quite a small space, intimate village setting.
- Greg – previous plan boundaries can shift, most everything is still on the table.
- Defeats purpose if you put housing there.
- Joe Crowley – New Auburn Social Club – Lewiston has all the mills. The river current is on the Auburn side very strong; we're going to need to dredge for boat ramp since water is very shallow in summer.
- Fill slope in, put boardwalk along shore like it is by the falls.
- Greg – mentioned the potential for river overlooks
- *How would you define an inviting "place" that would attract you to live, work and/or play there? Responses:*
 - Kathy Shaw– lots of interesting architecture, slow down of traffic, different lighting and colors in the street, where people don't drive fast, local food
 - Mayor LaBonté – There is tons of parking but there is a need for better lighting and safer access to and from it. New Auburn is looked at as a pass-thru, but it's also a gateway.
 - Belinda G- New Auburn – walkway promenade, overlooks water, music, lunch spots, walk, sit out there, kids fishing, people doing things, inviting place, summer activities, ice sculptures, theater, and singing.
 - Larry Pelletier – 2nd street business that we had that we lost include pharmacy, bank, etc. moved away or closed; only beauty shops are left.

- Apartment Owner – owns a few apartment buildings in the area, some people come from Portland to rent. He bought a parcel to sell back to the City (Not to profit on). Wouldn't discourage market development. Parking has to be walkable, area should be bike able. Need to slow down traffic redevelopment of road. Take ownership of the bridge. Use bridge as part of open space. Numbers will work as bridge as pedestrian space infilling parking behind buildings.
- Neat if we kept bridge connecting part of Riverwalk. Vehicles come so quickly from Lewiston; mirrors hit poles and fall in roadway all the time; too narrow and too fast. Sidewalk is very narrow and traffic is loud.
- John Roy – firehouse grill - complex, need identity in New Auburn. Step child, traffic problems and high speeds, beautiful architecture. Open up river for boating. It's a gateway but people will also be using side streets. Need a way around village. New Auburn has been neglected; need to put investment into it. The theater doesn't have to be big. Concerned about what we are going to do with traffic. People will walk if access is safer.
- Mayor LaBonté – Lewiston has made the decision to reduce lanes and traffic flow on their side. Want to prioritize the New Auburn Village side and reduce the number of lanes of traffic even if it impacts traffic flow in Lewiston. Not concerned about peak 15 minutes of traffic during rush hour, concern is safety of the village. Tighten up Broad Street.
- Andy's baked beans – continue businesses; not sell out and be forced to Minot or Rangeley; don't want to sell businesses to people from Portland. City should support local businesses with special loans to keep them.
- Question –what's happening to little Androscoggin pedestrian bridge of old mills walk, from New Auburn to falls?
 - Connectivity is important, timing and funds permitting.
 - 2000 Trails feasibility study of bridge across Little Androscoggin
- Need to stop segmenting funding into small amounts. Waste of money, should pool it all together to make a bigger impact; do bigger projects. City has enough parks already, need to maintain the ones they have. Think bigger long-term vision. Scale of project. Raising value, consider other areas in Auburn. Increase tax base. Redevelop this area; urban development in dribs and drabs won't raise tax value or have a return on investment.
- Design being one-way vs. two-way; Greg talked about the proposed roadway was most recently assumed to be two-way through a public process; but it's a starting point and we can reexamine assumptions like that based on sound engineering. Team will come back with ideas and drawings for people to weigh in on.

- They want benches but not if traffic is 45 mph, traffic needs to slow down.
- Traffic calming on Mill and Broad / necking down (this is outside of current project scope, but DOT will participate in projects on Mill and Broad that might include such features).
- Discussed the new bridge, should coordinate with MaineDOT; have them at the table. Replacement is more \$ than maintaining. Lewiston is not interested right now. Riverway plan needs to accommodate both options. Don't preclude bridge moving. There could be many benefits.
- Design the improvements for all 4 seasons.
- Community would like to see examples of other successful riverfront redevelopment projects in similar settings. What has and hasn't worked?
- Next public meeting will likely be in a couple of months.