



City of Beacon, New York

Office of the Mayor

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M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Main Street Access Committee

FROM: Mayor and City Council

DATE: 24 February 2020

SUBJECT: Overall Direction for Committee

Thank you for agreeing to serve on this committee. We are asking for you to help the City tackle and plan for issues involved in getting to and from Main Street. This is critically important for our residents, and even more so for the success of our Main Street businesses.

This memo covers two broad topics: (1) process issues, including committee organization, timing and resources; and (2) substantive issues, including categories and specific topics you should cover, and specific suggestions you should consider.

1. Process Issues. This is about how you organize yourselves, what tasks you want to undertake, and how you go about them. Most of these are for you to solve early on in your efforts.

- **Committee Membership:** Co-Chair Sara Pasti; the other Co-Chair is open, ideally someone who has a business or property on Main Street.
- **Frequency of Meetings:** Also for you to decide. You may want to meet more regularly at first until you get organized and get a sense of how the work is going. You may want to have some mix of formal meetings and then informal on-the-street sessions.
- **Resources:** Initially, our City Planner John Clarke, can offer you assistance and guidance. Depending on the tasks you decide to undertake, John may suggest additional resources, e.g., a traffic engineer with expertise on all forms of transport/transit, an engineer to help ballpark infrastructure costs, the City's Finance Director to help understand bonding or other potential funding, expertise on laying out parking spaces. The Council is committed to providing you the necessary resources.
- **Timing:** You probably should have a target end date for a final report (e.g., end of the year), and some intermediate dates for read-outs, one for short-term suggestions, and a

couple more for longer-term plans and recommendations. You will likely be able to get a better sense of calendar once you lay out the tasks, working with your resources.

- **Council Direction and Interaction:** We will schedule an early session with the City Council, to go over some general tasks and ideas, and to answer any questions. We assume there will be checkpoints with the Council along the way as well. The Mayor and individual council members will be readily available for input, and may attend your meetings.
- **Data Collection:** You need to collect data on spaces by block, usage by time of day, etc. You will have help with this, though you may want to do your own walking tours.
- **Community Input:** You will want some form of community input, which could be written survey, public session, or both. We can coordinate on how this is best achieved. This is a supplement to, and not a replacement of, factual data collection.
- **Starting Point:** Start by reviewing the relevant parts of the 2017 Comprehensive Plan (on City website) – Section 4 on Main Street (Commercial, Office & Industrial Development) and Section 6 on Transportation. Then read the 2014 Beacon Center City Parking Analysis (attached), which is a specific starting point. The 2014 parking analysis provides a quantitative look at parking at that time, but no forward projection, other than to say there will likely be capacity issues in the future. That analysis comes with a set of recommendations; do not assume them to be correct. They were provided by the county, without community review or input, though that does not make them incorrect either. Rather, take them as potential ideas, along with other ideas, that you need to consider and that the community and council should have input into.

2. Substantive Issues

The overall goal of the Main Street Access Committee is to develop a holistic action plan for sustainable Main Street parking, traffic, public transit, pedestrian and non-vehicular use.

We want your analysis and proposals divided into (a) short-term opportunities or “quick fixes” that can be implemented relatively quickly, and (b) a longer term plan, including items that require more time and resources, along with ideas on how to fund. Below are some examples of each, which you should consider; the list is neither exhaustive, nor even necessarily correct. Use the data you put together, as well as your collective discussion and judgment, to assess. Note that the most obvious Main Street access issues are on weekends, and less so on weekdays. Keep this in mind as you consider analysis, issues and potential solutions.

2a. Short-Term Opportunities or “Quick Fixes”

- **Better Parking Signage:** Could we improve the signs that guide people to public parking lots, e.g., large blue “P” parking signs with arrows? Is there signage that could display highly visible parking maps? For example, the county lot at South Elm does not appear to have any signage regarding use; nor does the City’s municipal lot on Route 9D at the

end of Main. There is no signage in the curve of Main Street, telling drivers that there is a municipal lot just off Main Street on Churchill.

- **Adjust Main St Parking Space Layouts:** Could we review the Main Street parking spaces on each block, and see if there is a way of gaining a space where possible? The current striping was not necessarily done with optimizing on-street parking in mind. We might pick up a space simply by shortening a couple of spaces by a few inches, or shortening the yellow stripe zone by a foot or two. This would be done with the help of city safety staff, with a goal of safety but also an extra spot or two.
- **No Large Vehicle Parking on Main St:** In conjunction with reviewing Main St parking spaces, should we consider no oversize vehicle parking on Main Street, and see if that gets more spaces. We would have to put up very clear signage.
- **Side Street Parking Review:** What about side and back streets? Are the one-ways conducive to parking and traffic? Could we pick up spaces by rethinking the signage (e.g., gain a space end western end of Commerce by moving the “no parking” sign closer to the corner)? Would it help if side/back streets had striping?
- **Relocate Fire Hydrants:** Could we move hydrants currently in the middle of Main Street blocks over to the street corners (which are already yellow-striped), and pick up the spaces in the middle? We would have to explore feasibility and cost, but if it is done gradually using city staff, it might prove cost effective, or even receive grant funded.
- **Sharing Private Lots.** The 2014 analysis recommended encouraging shared parking in currently private lots. What has been done and how has it turned out? Are there other private lots that are have low utilization and could provide parking? What are ideas for incentives, e.g., reduced property tax?

2b. Longer-Term Plan

- **Parking Inventory:** Update the 2014 work to get an inventory of current private and public parking.
- **Parking Analysis / Projection:** Update the 2014 work to get a sense of current capacity utilization. Add to that expected parking usage over the next 5-10 years, trying to take into account expected growth and potential changes in vehicle usage. This will provide a projection capacity analysis. This work should be granular, e.g., block-by-block.
- **Back Street Parking Potential:** Do a slow walk behind Main Street. Look behind each block, on each side of Main Street, and review existing parking behind buildings and on back streets. Look for and record opportunities to obtain new parking areas, or combine areas into a larger more efficient parking, or other options. Record who owns what and how a better arrangement might yield more parking behind Main Street on each block. The 2014 work looked specifically at the block with VanNydeck behind it; read that for an idea of what might work behind Main Street. Another one to look at is Commerce Street. Look systematically.

- **Sidewalk / Pedestrian Review:** Do residents walk to Main Street, or once on Main, do they walk about or keep moving their vehicle? What portion walk; can that share be increased in a reasonable fashion? Look at whether we need additional sidewalks to get to/from Main Street and/or parking. For example, now that we have parking off Churchill Street, is there a sidewalk to walk to and from that lot up to Main Street? What about crossing the tracks between the two bridges over the creek? Disability access is being covered by current efforts, but review those efforts.
- **Transit / Non-Vehicular Review:** What is public transit usage? What about other means of transportation, e.g., bicycle? Do the sharrows work? Given Main Street's width, it may not be possible to dedicate part of Main Street to any one means of transit (except sidewalks for pedestrians), but discussion is relevant. Are there ways of actually achieving increased transit usage (recognizing that people in the end choose)?
- **Traffic Analysis:** How busy is Main Street in terms of traffic on the road? What is average speed? Is lower speed a good thing? Would street changes help? What about stop signs vs. traffic lights, or roundabouts?
- **Pocket Parks:** The Comprehensive Plan calls for small public spaces along Main Street, but no work has been done to achieve that. Take into account where these public spaces were described in the Comp Plan, and consider them in the parking, traffic and transit thinking.
- **Infrastructure:** If there is expected need for additional parking, document it block-by-block, on each side of Main Street. If there are target property acquisitions, e.g., an undeveloped lot behind Main Street, identify it. Consider whether a parking structure might be needed (as opposed to street parking scattered throughout the Main Street area), and if so, identify likely areas, and how much capacity might be needed from such structures. Provide a view on timing for any identified need.
- **Funding:** Review options for funding infrastructure investment. Provide a sense (not a definitive financial plan) of where the funding should come from. The city has created a dedicated fund for parking/transit improvements, but there are no funds there yet. Consider all possibilities – but not general higher taxes – including:
 - Grants for cities, Main Streets, etc., including Downtown Revitalization Initiative;
 - Annual parking assessment for buildings that lack sufficient parking (many buildings had parking requirements waived, while other buildings supply their own parking);
 - Monthly fee for Main Street resident parking stickers;
 - Metering on Main or off Main (this was in the 2014 analysis, but was not tested with residents or with shoppers who can go elsewhere);
 - Dedicating a portion of the existing higher tax rate paid by commercial property, in particular from higher tax revenue from recent Main Street development;
 - Bonding at low rates, if new development is expanding the tax base sufficiently, with a plan for repaying bonds with interest.