

Welcome To The Madison County Courier – June 6, 2010

Five-Way Intersection New Concept

Architects, PCD hold informational meeting on newest plans by Margo Frink



(Hamilton, NY) After seeking the public's input at several meetings, Elan Planning and Design presented its conceptual plan on the five-way intersection at an informational meeting June 3 at the library.

The idea to look at a redesign of the intersection began when Roger Bauman, managing director of the Partnership for Community Development attended a meeting and discovered that through the state Reinvestment Act, there was money available in transportation, but the projects had to be shovel-ready.

"We had nothing," Bauman said. So he went to the PCD and asked if they would consider looking at the intersection downtown. The PCD thought it was a great idea, Bauman said and presented it to the village. From there they took it to the planning board and Planning Board Chair Bob McVaugh said it was in the mission of the new master plan. A task force was born.

Elan, the architectural design team from Saratoga Springs, beat out the competition and has been working on developing a plan that will work for the village. After defining the projects goals, Elan narrowed down several options to two. They presented those two concepts Thursday night.

Peter Faith, assistant vice president of traffic and planning department manager of Greenman- Pedersen, Inc., who was working with Elan explained short-term recommendations of the intersection would require minor changes. In the short-term, the traffic light phasing would be modified to eliminate the left turn conflict. The light would maintain a concurrent pedestrian phase. Crosswalks would be identified and pole buttons would be replaced.

President of Elan, Lisa Nagle said the state Department of Transportation would share in the costs of these minor changes. Jere Tatich, principal at Elan explained the long-term planning concept. In this plan, the center line of Payne Street would be shifted to align with Lebanon Street. Sidewalks would widen to allow outdoor cafes. Crosswalks would be shortened, visibility would improve.

Improvements would be made to the north end of green and landscape improvements to the south end of the green. The amount of pavement would be condensed, Tatich said. Snow storage areas would need to be addressed.

He said in the plan a couple of on-street parking spaces would be eliminated but changes to the municipal parking lot by the library would add about 25 spaces.

The plan includes bump-outs to the outside of the green in different areas around the perimeter, and bump-outs on Lebanon Street with designated truck loading and unloading areas. Signage, added lighting to the war memorial, the reduction of the asphalt at the south of the green and some special pavement on East Broad Street to slow traffic down were other suggestions in the plan. He said from the previous meetings, people said they were afraid to cross the street at the post office and reducing the width and adding a bump-out could also be an option.

Most of the comments favored the plan and those in attendance offered additional suggestions. "When can we get started," said Patricia von Mechow, director of The Palace Theater. Von Mechow said it was the first time seeing the presentation and liked it but would like to see a designated bike route.

Tatich said it was talked about but it was decided to discourage bicyclists to stay away from the intersection and use trails or paths.

Bob Pils said with the current traffic signal phasing, motorists experience long back-ups on Broad Street. He wanted to know if phasing could be changed during Hamilton's busy weekends. Faith said the DOT could adjust the lights and a test could be done very soon if board approved. "What type of price tag are you envisioning?" Pils asked.

Tatich said with a 25 to 30 percent contingency (money held in reserve) the approximate cost is \$2.5 million. He said the village could piece the project together and suggested applying for grant money.

Snow plowing and snow storage were discussed and some felt it would be difficult to plow around the bump-outs. Carl Albrecht, president of the PCD board of directors said it was discussed thoroughly and the director of the DPW said, "Yes, we can plow." Russ Lura said he felt it wasn't necessary to maintain three lanes on Broad Street and it was more of a problem than an advantage. McVaugh said the three lanes on Broad Street helps with deliveries and double parking of trucks. John Basher said the bottleneck at the post office hadn't been addressed. He wanted to know why the sidewalks had to be any wider and the only time they are full is at 2 or 3 a.m. when the students empty the bars. Von Mechow disagreed and felt larger sidewalks with space for outdoor café seating was alluring and might invite people to stop and shop. She suggested a specific loading area. Deborah Sill Kliman asked what provisions were made for unloading. Tatich said the design suggests spots on Lebanon Street and the corner of Lebanon and Broad streets for designated unloading areas.

Nagle said the comments will go into a brief report for the task force and then to the village board with a drafted resolution that supports the goals of the project. More resources will be needed to do an additional study, she said