
From: Weston Town Hall <listserv@civicplus.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 12, 2019 1:36 PM
To:
Subject: Info on Town Center Open Space, Parking & Utilities - March 18 Town Meeting



- Part 2 - Parking, Open Space and Utilities

The information below is the second of two articles. The [first article focused on the traffic and safety improvements](#) that would be gained from this project. This accompanying article will address public open spaces and activities, parking improvements, and the burial of the existing overhead utilities wiring.

The Town Green is one of Weston's greatest assets. It is a superb public space used for a multitude of Town activities. Every year Weston's High School Graduation Ceremony takes place here (in good weather), with the graduates walking down the hill toward the Town Hall in their white dresses and jackets to receive their certificates in front of their families and friends gathered on the lawn. The Town Green is used for summer concerts and movie nights, Memorial Day events and the 9/11 flag memorial.

It provides a place for holiday observances, special events, sun tanning in the summer and sledding down the hill in winter -- with parents and children together enjoying the fresh snow -- and even an opportunity for skating. The Town Green is Weston's community heart.

Why a March Special Town Meeting?

On [March 18th, a Special Town Meeting will be held](#) at 7:00 p.m. in the High School to vote on the construction funds needed to reconstruct Weston's Town Center on Boston Post Road, west from Linwood Avenue through the center of town to the eastern end of the Town Green (at the intersection of Church Street and Conant Road).

The plan was presented to the [November 27, 2018 Special Town Meeting](#). Just prior to that town meeting, only one construction bid was received for the project. Without comparable bids, voters felt there was no certainty the bid price reflected the current state of the construction market. As a result, voters chose to pass over the articles in favor of re-bidding the project and bringing the request back to a spring Special Town Meeting.

The presentation from the November Special Town Meeting and additional project information are available on the Town's website at weston.org/TownCenter.



Public Open Space and Activities

Over time, the original Arthur Shurcliff design has been eroded. [His design once provided viewscapes](#) looking east and west, using rows of formally planted trees as framing devices. The western view today now focuses on parked cars. The introduction of power poles and the loss of major trees along the Post Road have diminished the impact of Shurcliff's design.

The new Town Center Plan recreates the physical linkages designed by Shurcliff and extends his visual vistas to and from the Town Green and along the Boston Post Road. The proposed Town Center Plan also helps to revive and enhance the original design with the introduction of three new public spaces that will allow the community to increase and broaden our use of the whole Town Center. The Plan achieves these goals in the following ways:

- The Town Center Plan restores the placement of trees framing the Post Road and extends the tree line through the Center along the north side of the road, replacing trees where they have been lost. If the Town Meeting decides to include burial of utilities as proposed, it will be possible to replant the original line of trees along the south side of the Post Road as well
- There will be three new destination spaces:
 - **Knox Park** - a smaller green space across Town House Road, beyond the western end of the Town Green and replacing the view of parked cars with a calm resting space;
 - **Town Square** - on the south side of the Post Road, creating an additional focus for activities in the Town Center; and,
 - **The Terraces** - the Plan provides an intimate outdoor seating and dining space beyond the Square.
- All of these new public spaces fall within the Town Center and expand the range and types of areas available for public events, providing for smaller scale activities—for planned formal events as well as for instantaneous, informal happenings—that are overwhelmed by the larger space of the Town Green
- The sidewalks and landscaped areas along the Post Road, where roads and driveways currently cross, will be better linked together, with interruptions reduced wherever possible, making the trip through the Town Center more pleasant, safer and easier for parents with smaller children

Parking Improvements

The Town Center Plan addresses the issue of parking by making several revisions to the existing areas; these will improve the efficiency of both on-street parking and off-street parking areas. As a result, the number of spaces available in the Town Center will be slightly increased. Presently, the numbers, locations and sizes of existing parking spaces is random and inconsistent along the length of Boston Post Road.

The new plan provides for the following:



- The varying lengths and widths of marked parking spaces will be made consistent
- Center Street, between the Central Fire Station and the shopping center, is currently a divided road and will become a two-way street. Parking will be limited to spaces along the east side, and these spaces will be dedicated for the use of the Fire Department
- The lot at the shopping area will be expanded, and the layout will be more efficient. Parking spaces removed from Center Street will be incorporated into the larger lot, locating them closer to driver's shopping and eating and business destinations
- Driveway access lanes will be leveled, eliminating the problem of "bottoming out" and the potential damage to the undercarriage of lower autos
- Handicapped accessible parking spaces will be spread more evenly through the Town Center and will be provided with required areas for driver and passenger exit and entry
- The parking available along Town House Road will be increased with the addition of a parking lane on the north side to the east of Town Hall. This will provide additional spaces for people attending meetings and events at Town Hall. These spaces will also be available for those planning to use the new Rail Trail; they are a short walking or riding distance from the Church Street trail entry point (where there will be six additional parking spaces available)



The Burial of the Existing Overhead Utilities - Warrant Article 2

The proposed Town Center Plan under consideration at the Special Town Meeting is divided into two warrant articles:

Article 1

The first Town Meeting agenda item comprises the major portion of the work, including all the general roadway, drainage, traffic, sidewalk, landscaping and public space

improvements that have resulted from the requirement to lay new gas service through the center of Weston. The replacement of the existing roadway and sidewalks with new construction will meet all State Highway Construction Standards as well as code and accessibility requirements.

Article 2

The second part of the Town Center Improvement Project that will be under consideration on March 18th includes the burial of overhead utilities along the length of Boston Post Road that will be rebuilt. The first part of this work, under Article 1, is necessary. The second part, included in Article 2, represents a further enhancement to the planned improvements.

The burial of utilities offers additional advantages and enhancements of the Town Center, which include the following:

- General safety will be improved in the long run with the removal of above-surface utility lines and their support poles. This eliminates the potential for collapse of utility poles as has been experienced by nearby towns in recent years (including Natick and Watertown, among others)
- It is expected that the numbers of existing transformers and switches required by

the utility companies will increase in the future. Even new poles will tilt and bend from the weight and strain of utility wires and pole-mounted equipment pushed by wind and weather

- Fire-fighting apparatus positioned at the face of buildings will not have to reach across lines and poles in order to gain access to the upper stories and roofs of buildings
- The current tangle of an ever-increasing number of wires, tilting poles, and large pole-mounted transformers and switches will be removed, greatly improving the image of the Town Center
- Removing the randomly placed poles will permit placement of evenly spaced streetlights along both sides of the Post Road. The south side is currently restricted by the locations of the existing poles. If the poles are not removed, new lights will be mounted on the sides of the existing poles where they stand
- Planting of new street trees along the south side of the Post Road becomes possible with the removal of the overhead wires. Matching new trees on the south side of the Post Road to the existing trees on the north side of the road is not possible if the wires remain because of the heights of the original species of street trees used along the Post Road. We anticipate that 36 more trees can be planted if we bury the utilities
- Eliminating the randomly located poles located within the sidewalks on both sides of the Post Road will permit easier movement along the walks as well as better and safer placement of crosswalks and parking areas

In general, the major cost involved in burying utility lines results from the need to open and excavate under the street and sidewalks. Because this portion of the work is already required through the Town Center as a result of the recent installation of the new gas main, the additional cost of utility burial, if performed now, is greatly reduced and represents no more interruption of travel and business activity than the roadwork itself.

If the Town decides to put this work off to the future, the process will require a repeat of the current street and sidewalk construction, with the replacement of the newly installed street and sidewalks - for this reason, **the Committee strongly feels that now is the time to remove the poles and bury the wires.**

As we have mentioned in [previous Town Meetings](#), the list of local and nearby communities that have buried their utilities and enhanced their town centers is ever increasing. The list includes Waltham, Wellesley, Concord, Lexington, Belmont, Newburyport, Marblehead, and Medford to name a few. It is the choice of the voters, but if we elect not to bury the utility poles, this opportunity will likely not arise for another generation or two. It may be more if history is a forecast of future action. This may be our last chance.

Linkage Within and Around Town Center

Through our many public meetings and public forums, we have stressed the benefits of the project to the Town of Weston. The list is numerous:

- Traffic calming and safety
- better-defined traffic circulation
- safe pedestrian travel in and around the Town Green and commercial areas with wider and continuous “accessible” sidewalks
- better parking distribution
- evenly distributed lighting; and,
- updated site drainage

What's more, the companion and physical linkage to and from:

- the Town Green
- new open spaces
- the soon-to-be-open Art and Innovation Center
- the Josiah Smith Tavern

The aesthetic improvements contemplated, all at an appropriate rural scale would create a town center of which residents can truly be proud.

Burying the utilities will further enhance the benefits referenced above. One need only visit surrounding communities to see how these carefully planned and scaled improvements can enliven a town center. In the end, the goal is to enhance our town center so it is a walkable destination, even in the evening, for all our citizens and more vital for sustaining our businesses; a true destination.

Project Background

The [Town Center Improvement Project](#) is the first opportunity in over a hundred years -- since the design and construction of the Town Green -- to enhance the quality of the Town Center by addressing pedestrian and traffic safety, parking availability, and a variety of public activities as well as the appearance of the town.

This work was initially driven by the need to replace the gas mains running through the center of town. The Board of Selectmen, realizing that the Post Road would need to be reconstructed as a result of National Grid's gas work, as well as the need to address deferred infrastructure reconstruction, created the Town Center Planning Committee to consider other physical improvements more holistically, including the design and appearance of this important area.

 Share on Facebook

 Share on Twitter

 Share via Email

Copyright 2019 Weston, Mass. All Rights Reserved.
11 Town House Road, Weston, Mass. 02493
Comments can be sent to webmaster@westonmass.org


Powered by

If you no longer wish to receive emails from us, you may [Unsubscribe](#).

Email not displaying correctly? [View it in your browser](#).