

Prospect Sidewalk Task Force  
Special Meeting  
Unapproved Minutes  
March 26, 2025

Approved  
7/1/25  
Carla M  


Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams Platform hosted by VHB, Inc. called to order at 3:03 pm by Sidewalk Task Force (STF) Chair, Carla Perugini-Erickson

Attendees: Mayor Robert Chatfield

Organization	Members
Prospect Sidewalk Task Force (STF)	Carla Perugini-Erickson, Chair Rob Edwards Bob Albert Theresa Graveline Betty Bajek
Prospect Town Council	Mike Palmieri, Chair Rich Blanc Loreen Elbakry
Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments (NVCOG)	Richard Donovan Kevin Ellis
Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT)	Michael Cherpak Kristen Levesque Devin Racicot
SLR	Marc Mancini Anthony Cirello
VBH	James Kulpa
Public	Carl Graveline Michael Kosciuszko

Discussion:

The pledge of allegiance was recited, and attendance was taken.

Carla provided a brief synopsis of the Public Hearing held at the Prospect Firehouse on February 19, 2025. Basically, the residents who attended the meeting expressed opposition to implementing sidewalks to Prospect Elementary School (PES) mostly for safety reasons and concerns over PES students using it unsupervised, and the Town Council felt the costs outweighed the benefits based upon their own presumption that the sidewalk would not be used by residents for walking or biking in that remote location. There appears to be a lack of understanding that the rock ledge would be removed, as detailed in the current plans, providing a clear line of sight when exiting Coer Road onto Rt. 69 and the sidewalks would be in the neighborhood of 15 feet off of Rt. 69 additionally protected by metal & wooden guardrails and pedestrian barriers.

Rob Edwards stated that the state should look into removing the rock ledge due to the safety concerns, irrespective of the sidewalk project.

Mayor Chatfield, the Mayor since 1974, and a member of the STF, noted there is one sidewalk project very close to completion and two other sidewalk projects in progress which concerns the Mayor with regards to the town's financial obligations and taking on additional financial

responsibilities with a Transportation Alternative (TA) Grant. He questioned how quickly the town would be reimbursed. James Kulpa (VHB) stated the state turns the payments around in 30 days.

The following information regarding the status of the 3 sidewalk projects excerpted from previous STF meeting minutes is provided here for reference:

**Project 1: St. Anthony to LaBonne's: LOTCIP Grant-** DOT issued final approval of the exclusive phase pedestrian signal at the intersection of Rt. 68 and 69; sidewalk contractor now coordinating the implementation of the exclusive pedestrian phase with NY-CON. That project should be implemented soon with remaining funds from LOTCIP grant. Mayor asked cost of the upgrade. Marc estimated \$25,000. Mayor will check on the balance of the LOTCIP funds.

**Project 2: Old Schoolhouse to Rt 68 to Center St: Community Connectivity Grant -** As of January 2025, SLR received additional comments from the CT DOT regarding the traffic signal on Old Schoolhouse and Rt. 68; there is all new crossing and traffic signal lighting installed there now. The lighting project is near completion, so the CCG can likely go out for bid this SPRING 2025, with construction before the SNOW in 2025.

**Project 3: LaBonne's to Country Plaza: STEAP Grant -** SLR received comments from DOT re: status of sidewalk design and revised lighting design; they are now gearing up for final submission to DOT; this will likely go out to BID in May or June 2025, with construction possible to start by SEPTEMBER 2025.

With regard to the TA Grant discussed at the Town Council meeting, Loreen Elbakry, who is the newest and youngest member of Town Council stated that she has children at PES, and she said parents park their cars on the highway shoulder and navigate the roadway with their children. She said sidewalks can only improve the safety of this area. There was group discussion about the pathway to Caplan Field that was shown as a concept on the TA application. Mayor suggested use of some of the TA Grants in this way could be facilitated with Region 16. James Kulpa stated the TA Grant can absolutely be utilized for off-road pathways and bikeways, and for lighting those pathways.

Mike Cherpak (CTDOT) asked what changed since the town applied for the grant and funding. The State looks to put sidewalks on state roads in support of pedestrian and bicycle safety. It appears the project is now unsupported by the residents. Tony Cirello from SLR stated at the very first public hearing for sidewalks, there was a young mother "begging" to have sidewalks installed to PES. Going on that premise, the town applied for the TA Grant. However, the cost and its impact on taxes is a real issue for residents.

The TA Grant is a federal grant where the Town will contribute 20% of the project costs and the State will contribute 80% of the project costs. The Engineer's Opinion of Construction Costs estimated the project total to be \$3,398,000, which includes 25% for contingencies, incidentals and inflation. The total project cost including design is approximately \$3.6 million, and DOT will increase the estimated grant for cost escalation. This is a reimbursement grant, so the Town will have to fund the upfront costs as they are incurred, and DOT will reimburse usually within one month of submission of the reimbursement request with the invoice. The estimated 20% cost to the Town will be \$720,000, spread out over 3-to-4 fiscal years, and the State reimbursement will be \$2,880,000.

Richard Donovan stated the NVCOG looks at projects within its purview and prioritizes them across the region. NVCOG allocated the monies to the Prospect project, and most interesting is the fact that the Prospect project is the only major project in the region. The NVCOG is happy to work with the Town and willing to consider modifications that the Town may propose for use of these funds.

Mike Palmerie asked if the funds for the TA Grant had been frozen, since this is federal money. James replied that it is funded out of the Highway Trust Fund, which is not frozen.

Carl Graveline commented that he doesn't want us to lose the opportunity to improve the safety of our town and stimulate the local economy, and suggested sidewalks could be implemented on Rt. 68 towards Naugatuck.

Mike Cherpak noted that other towns have also been challenged with managing the financial aspect of projects. In Pomfret, the town had a \$6M project (twice its annual budget) and took out a low-interest line of credit to ease the financial burden. A Line of Credit has been suggested by Theresa Graveline at previous STF and Town Council meetings as an alternative to bonding. In Guilford, the town wrote a letter to their Council of Governments (COG) to change the scope of the project. After consultation, that change was approved by the COG.

Mike Cherpak further stated that the Town can pivot and determine a different location (or multiple locations) for the funds. Perhaps both sides of route 69? The Mayor would prefer installing sidewalks on Rts. 68 & 69. Maybe a walking path from PES to Caplan Field? Maybe phased-in projects? All of these options are up for discussion and consideration by the Town.

It was decided that a meeting will be scheduled in May, after the Town's budget season has been concluded, to consider use of the grant funds for a modified scope of the project.

As DOT Mike Cherpak said, the DOT is not going to force Prospect to take this money. Carla noted that Prospect is really SO FORTUNATE to have been awarded this huge grant which can really be used for any transportation alternative projects in town. If Prospect can't use it, DOT will just give it to some other town in this region. We cannot let another town or city benefit from OUR RESIDENTS' TAX DOLLARS!

Carla stated that she felt the meeting was extremely helpful and informative, and she thanked James Kulpa for pressing her to schedule the meeting. Carla stated that although the proposed location of the sidewalk project for the TA Grant was fully vetted before applying, and the Mayor and members of the STF walked the area by Coer Road with Richard Donovan (NVCOG), a DOT rep, Tony Cirello and Marc Mancini from SLR recognizing the need to remove the ledge and enhance safety for pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists, after the public commentary at the Town Council meeting, she recognizes that the residents have concerns with the location. She feels the discussion today was very helpful, and evidenced how sidewalks to PES can enhance safety by Coer Road and also brought to light many possible alternative uses for the funds – including a lighted off-road path to Caplan Field, sidewalks along Rt. 68 to the Naugatuck line, or even sidewalks on the other side of Rt. 69. There are so many possibilities and a great need in Prospect for more sidewalks and safety.

She also understands that the Town's share of the cost can be intimidating to some residents who live on limited budgets and have concerns about tax increases. She feels the information provided by James Kulpa showing the breakdown of the Town's share of the costs and timing of payments was helpful. Based on that information, the two other pending sidewalk projects will be completed, so there will not be multiple projects posing a financial burden on the Town. She noted that the bulk of the TA funds won't even be due until fiscal year ending 2028 when construction starts. Also, Carla stated it was helpful to know how other small towns that desperately want to benefit from these invaluable grants manage the costs. To hear that Pomfret, with a population of 4200, was awarded a \$6M TA Grant and their mayor opted to utilize a line of credit further supports Theresa's repeated recommendation for Prospect to obtain a line of credit. This low-interest line of credit option should

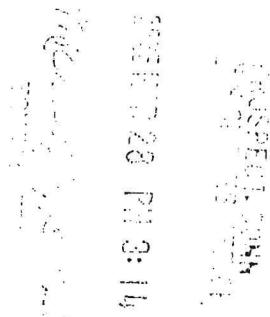
be reassuring to the Town Council, which also had concerns regarding the financial impact. Carla stressed that this TA Grant is an invaluable opportunity for Prospect, and it is a chance to bring our own tax dollars which we all pay to the state and federal government back to our Prospect.

Carla thanked the representatives from DOT, VHB, and the NVCOG as well as the Mayor, STF & Town Council members and members of the public for attending today's meeting.

Theresa made a Motion to Adjourn, seconded by Mayor Bob.  
All in favor; meeting adjourned at 4:12 pm

***Submitted by:***

***Betty A. Bajek on behalf of Carla M. Perugini-Erickson***

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "BETTY A. BAJEK".A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "CARLA M. PERUGINI-ERIKSON".