



Town of Winchester

Michael Bettencourt, Chair
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June 8, 2020

Dear Mr. Moderator, Town Meeting Members:

On behalf of the Select Board, please accept this report and update on initiatives, ongoing projects, and priorities as we look towards the future. While I wish I could be providing this report in person, I am grateful for the opportunity to continue to conduct the business of the Town, together, in this alternate format.

The Winchester community has shown enormous resiliency and empathy in response to the COVID19 pandemic. This public health crisis will have long-term impacts on our families, resources, and community for years to come. As we continue to tackle these obstacles, whether it be to support our local businesses, provide for our most vulnerable or reopen our school facilities, it is essential that we acknowledge that this experience will be different and unique for everyone in our community. There will be no simple solutions, but it is an opportunity for us to reinforce our shared values and emerge resolved and ready for what lies ahead.

Please join me in extending appreciation to our Town and School Department staff, municipal employees and our elected and appointed officials for their exemplary service during the COVID-19 pandemic response. There was no playbook for responding to a crisis of this magnitude and breadth and Winchester responded exceptionally. I want to give a heartfelt and special thanks to our first responders and, specifically, Jennifer Murphy, Director of our Health Department, as well as The Board of Health for their response efforts, which will be essential to our health and wellness in years to come.

While many communities have had prior experience with electronic voting and virtual meetings, this is uncharted territory for Winchester. Holding our Town Meeting, virtually, has involved truly heroic efforts from our staff and especially our Town Clerk, MaryEllen Lannon. *Thank you.*

Over the next couple of years, Winchester will continue to grow and evolve. Despite the successful ten-million-dollar operating override in 2019, structural deficits remain. These limitations hinder our ability to respond to emergent budgetary needs while maintaining our service levels and Aaa bond rating, which we have retained for another year. This validates the careful financial planning by the Town and will help our preparation for anticipated borrowing and position us well for the reorganization of some of our existing bonds to decrease debt service.

Enrollment in our schools continues to grow, more than 12% in the last decade alone, and will require significant investment for operating and capital needs. The Massachusetts State Building Authority has finally agreed to partner with us on The Lynch School project, with an anticipated opening in 2025. This long-anticipated project will require a debt-exclusion override in FY22 as we address the long-term capital needs of The Muraco School.

In response to multiple hostile 40B projects, the Town adopted a Housing Production Plan on February 25, 2019, which led to the approved River Street development which will add 147 units of housing to the Town. This project will provide much-needed affordable housing for our community and increase our Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) percentage to 3.74%. On May 26, 2020 the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) certified the project and our safe harbor status. This means Winchester cannot be targeted for hostile 40B projects until after March 18, 2022. In order to maintain our safe harbor status, we must continue to produce at least seventy-nine units until we reach 10%. This will contribute to further enrollment increases in our schools.

In FY21 the State will grapple with a projected 20% revenue decline and has not agreed to a budget as of Town Meeting. This will ultimately impact local aid, including Chapter 70 funding if planned increases are reduced as our schools and unfunded mandates continue their upward trend.

In coming years, Winchester will continue to struggle with staying competitive with comparable communities for municipal employee compensation, for union and non-union employees. The Town's ability to attract and retain employees for certain departments will create financial exposure to the Town as we try to staff public safety and school district positions. Short-term solutions with singular bargaining units will cause significant, unplanned increases. The Town has been successful with operating overrides which focus on the school budgets, but other departments will continue to lag without some long-term commitment to stabilization.

On June 1, 2020, the Select Board voted to adopt the recommendations presented in the updated Climate Action Plan. After over a year in development, the Climate Action Plan Committee presented a completed Climate Action Plan to the Select Board which was approved unanimously. The Plan continues the Town's commitment to reduce and prevent the deleterious effects of climate change by reducing carbon pollution and enhancing community resilience. As part of the plan implementation it is highly recommended that the Town hire a Sustainability Director. In many of our peer communities, this position has returned its operating costs more than two-fold through grants and energy savings.

The Town Center will be undergoing a period of transition as the long-deliberated MBTA Train Station project will commence, pending Town Meeting approval. The MBTA has committed in excess of \$50 million dollars to the project which will take approximately twenty-eight months to construct. The Town is, contemporaneously, seeking a development for affordable housing at the abutting Waterfield Lot. The Town will be issuing a Request for Proposals in the coming weeks. We continue to work with the Chamber of Commerce to manage the traffic and

construction impacting local businesses and to create growth opportunities to mitigate the disruption.

As part of my report, I have included several updates for ongoing and upcoming municipal projects funded by Town Meeting and residents. Again, thank you for your service to the Town and your patience throughout this very difficult past several months, and those ahead. I believe the Town will emerge stronger as we work together and reaffirm our shared values as a caring and connected community.

On behalf of the Select Board,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Bettencourt". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Michael Bettencourt
Chair, Winchester Select Board

SPRINGTOWN MEETING REPORT

Winchester Select Board - 2020

Michael Bettencourt, Chair

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Town of Winchester

Human Rights Statement

Winchester is a community that is grounded in respect for every individual, and therefore protects all residents, employees, business owners, students and visitors in the enjoyment and exercise of human and civil rights. It is Town policy to ensure equal treatment and opportunity to all individuals regardless of race, gender, gender identity, ethnicity, religion, ideology, socio-economic status, health, sexual orientation, age, military status, disability, country of origin or immigration status.

SUMMARY OF RECENT MUNICIPAL PROJECTS

INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS: Water, Sewer, Drainage, Bridges, & Flooding

Project	Status
Town Hall and Public Safety Building Generator	Construction complete in mid-June
Wildwood Street drainage project	Construction complete by July 15
Waterfield Road Bridge reconstruction	Construction June – August 2020
Lake Street Bridge reconstruction	Currently in design & permitting
Swanton Street Bridge flood mitigation project	Currently in permitting
North Reservoir Dam repairs & LLO (Design)	Currently in design & permitting
Saw Mill Brook drainage improvements	Completed in summer 2019
Lead Service Line replacement project	Multi-year program; construction on-going
Phase II sewer I&I improvements	Complete
MS ₄ Stormwater Permit	5-year program; Year 2 complete in June 2020

WILDWOOD STREET DRAINAGE PROJECT: Infiltration System under West Side Field



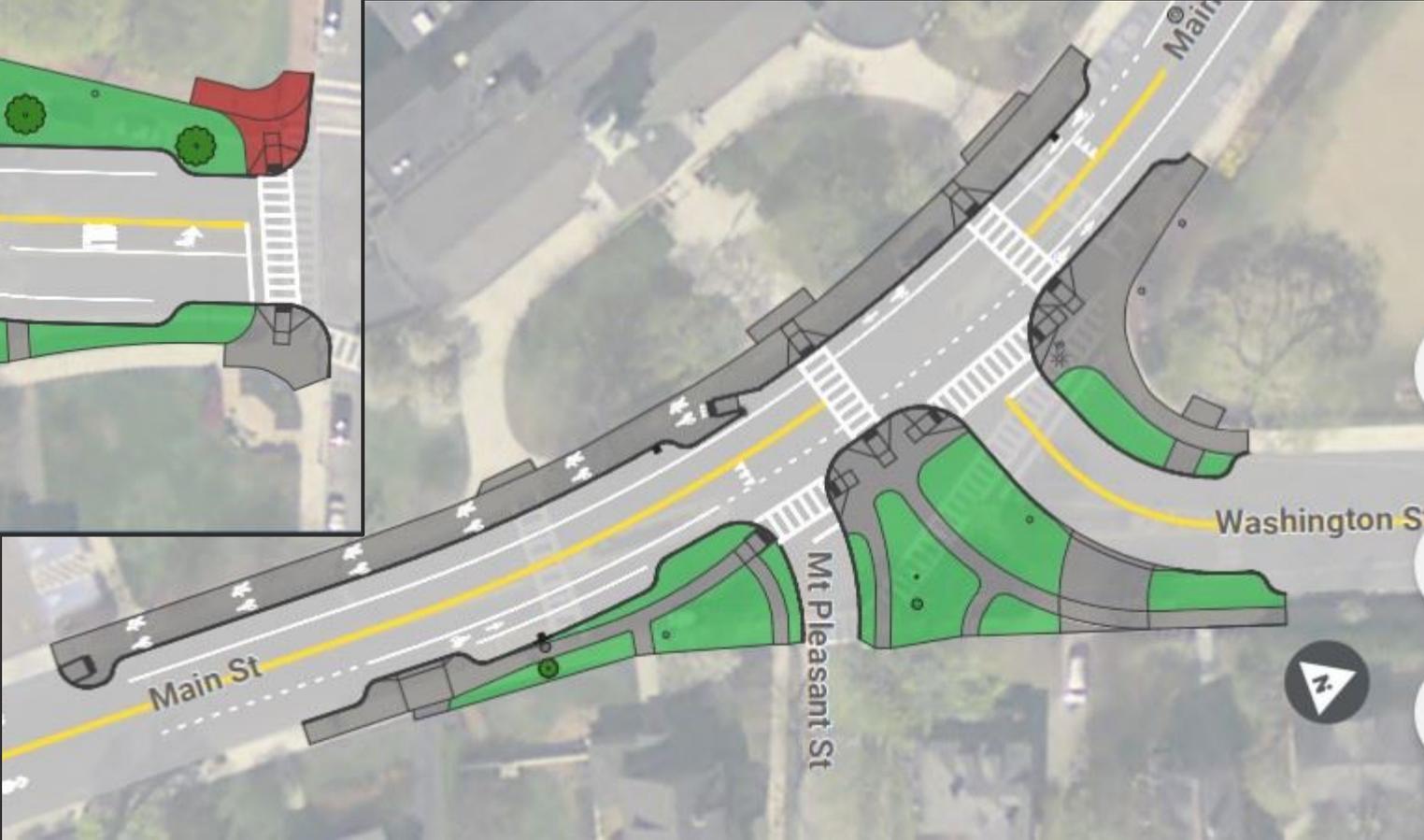
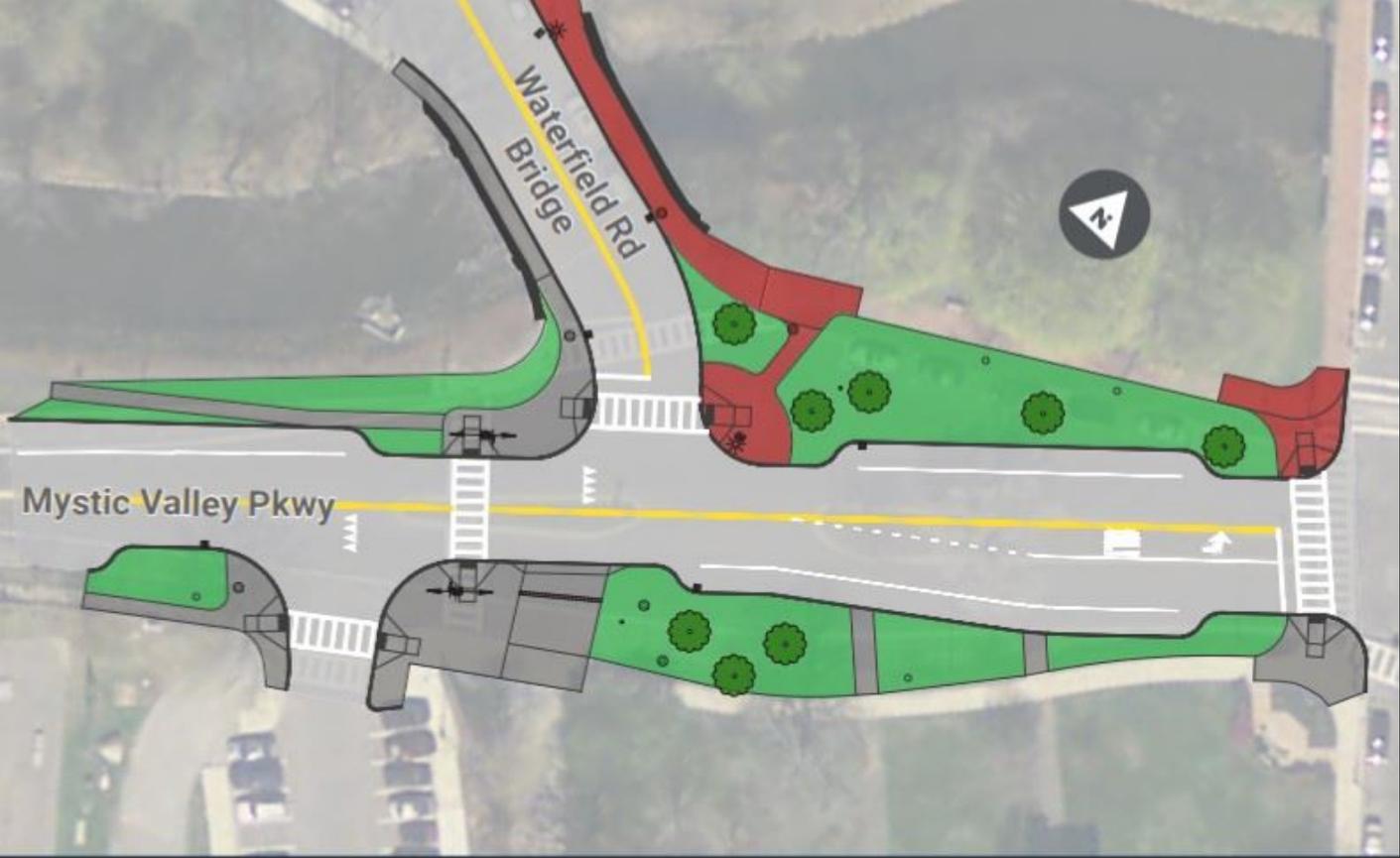
TRAFFIC-RELATED PROJECTS & STUDIES

Project	Status
Main Street and Highland Avenue reconstruction	Completed in May 2020
McCall School traffic calming Projects	Construction June – August 2020
Church Street at Waterfield Road traffic calming improvements	Design currently underway
Muraco School sidewalk construction	Completed May 2020
Vinson Owen Safe Routes to School Project	Construction early 2021
Cross Street and Highland Avenue Corridor studies	Completed fall 2019
Waterfield Road – Bikeway crossing study	On-going
DPW Roads and Sidewalks	On-going

MAIN ST AT HIGHLAND AVE TRAFFIC CALMING



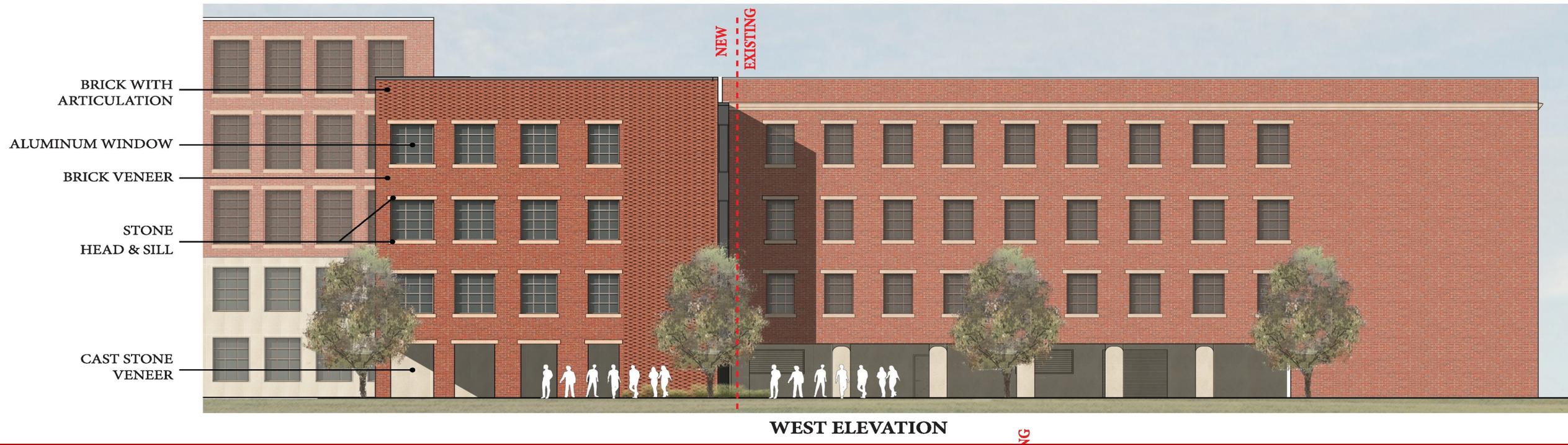
MCCALL SCHOOL TRAFFIC CALMING PROJECT



SCHOOL-RELATED PROJECTS & STUDIES

Project	Status
McCall Middle School Addition – Phase I and II	August 2020 completion
Parkhurst School elevator installation	November 2020 completion expected
Manchester Field track repairs	August 2020 completion
Muraco School sink and cabinet replacement	August 2020 completion
VO and WHS solar installations	Complete in 2019
Lincoln school exterior walkway repairs	On-going

MCCALL MIDDLE SCHOOL ADDITION



OTHER PROJECTS & STUDIES

Project	Status
Town Common – Saltmarsh Terrace	Complete in August 2020
Aberjona River landscape improvements	
Library HVAC improvements	
Public Buildings Risk Assessment Study	
Fields Master Plan	
Needs Assessment	
ADA Transition Plan	

TOWN COMMON – SALTMARSH TERRACE



IN CLOSING...

THANK YOU TO OUR GREAT STAFF, FIRST RESPONDERS, TOWN MEETING MEMBERS AND MODERATOR FOR WORKING TOGETHER TO KEEP THE TOWN MOVING FORWARD.

PLEASE FIND THE SELECT BOARD'S JOINT STATEMENT ON SYSTEMIC RACISM HERE:

<https://nfsj.org/network-statement-on-police-brutality-and-systemic-racism/>