

The Church Rd. Sidewalk Project

This review of the draft sidewalk plan is focused on the various attributes relevant for this project. All of these attributes must be addressed to achieve a satisfactory sidewalk system that is in the best interests of the users and residents.

Safety. The Church Rd sidewalk project is located in both the Village and Village Residential zones and is intended for users to safely travel within these zones without having to use the street itself. The speed limit on Church Rd between the corner and the fairgrounds is 25 mph and is almost never enforced. Presently people transit on both sides of the road but only the Eastern side has room in the right of way. The massive ditch on the West side precludes safe use of the right of way. Because many culvert openings are extremely close to the edge of the driveway, vehicles have been driven off into the ditch. Option 1 removes this ditch whereas Option 2 does not. In addition, the present set of street lights is on the West side and from a pedestrian safety perspective, sidewalks and street lights should always be on the same side. Thus, for the safety of the users, Option 1 is much more desirable. And in Option 1, an elevated cross-walk could be located between Poulin-Perry where there is a street light and good sight lines.

Water Drainage. Church Rd is cambered such that water on the road bed drains to either side. On the East side, this water permeates into the adjacent right of way and lawns. On the West side, this water drains into the massive ditch. Because this ditch was created by various contractors, unsupervised, without specification, and left to their own eye ball, it does not drain effectively. In addition, there is much water in the ditch that drains off the adjacent hillside. Thus, the net result is most of the water in the ditch permeates into the ground and drains under the road along with all the other water on top of the layer of clay that exists throughout the Readfield corner area.

It is not clear to where the proposed underground drain line in both options would drain. Are the existing under-road drainage culverts going to be used? Should not the former under-road drainage between Therriault-Gomartly be restored? Since these new drainage lines should be located below the freeze line, how deep do they have to be in order to still drain their entire length? It appears to me that by using the existing under-road drainage at Morrow and restoring the under-road drainage , water drainage is greatly simplified.

When this massive ditch was created in the 1990s, it was excavated to a depth that was well below the drain line for the under-road culvert in front of David Morrow. This excavation also undermined a tree's root system resulting in the tree toppling into the newly created ditch and undermined David's leach field resulting in the town having to replace it. The Option 1 proposed plan indicates construction would take place beyond the right of way into homeowner's property and extremely close to all the trees which are located near the edge of the right of way. Thus this option must be confined to have construction only in the right of way the same as Option 2. In Option 2, there are many large and elderly maple trees in the right of way which most likely will be compromised by digging for the drainage line. We can not lose our trees on either side due to this project!

Parking. Presently, some parking does take place on Church Rd. - primarily on the East side where the shoulder can be extended into the right of way. No parking is feasible on the West side due to the massive ditch. The parking that does take place on the East side is generally by residents, contractors or delivery vehicles. Parking has taken place on the West side with the vehicles parked mostly in the travel-way. This, however, creates a dangerous situation forcing pedestrians to walk in the middle of the road and narrowing the travel-way to a single lane. All the property owners on the West side have off-street parking. However, the Meeting House which conducts many events throughout the year does not have adequate parking for the capacity of its buildings. Furthermore,

they have been told by the town that they can not have parking on either side for their events but the town has not provided alternative parking. Neither option adequately addresses this issue. In fact, Option 2 effectively eliminates any parking (whether temporary or not) on both sides of this residential street.

Option 1 provides for an esplanade but identifies that at the Rt. 17 corner this will require relocation of a major power pole and recommends the sidewalk be curbside at this point. Having an esplanade is not desirable nor is it in keeping with the history and rural character of the town. Furthermore, where an esplanade may be okay on a 4 rod right of way, it should not be considered for a 3 rod right of way. Thus, it is recommended that Option 1 be modified to reflect the sidewalk located curbside in the Village zone and an extended shoulder for parking at the Meeting House and in the Village Residential zone in lieu of an esplanade. Finally, the Option 1 sidewalk provides a safer walkway for people attending Union Meeting House activities and Village zone businesses on Church Rd.

Handicap Accessibility. Several buildings on Church Rd. have provisions for handicap personnel to access the structure primarily via the adjacent driveway. Other than the possible cross-walks discussed in the options and the driveways, neither appears to provide for handicap access to use the sidewalk. The proposed curbing would preclude residents on the opposite side of the sidewalk from being able to cross the street unless they went from driveway to driveway. And with the high rate of speed on Church Rd., this would be very dangerous. The logical solutions to this deficiency are to use both options to provide a sidewalk on both sides or design the options so that there is not a concrete curb.

Summary. Pros and Cons

	<u>PROS</u>	
<u>Option 1</u>		<u>Option 2</u>
Existing hazardous and ineffective drainage to be removed and replaced with closed drainage		Provides for slightly better drainage
Provides for parking (if no esplanade) on West side		Does not impact private property
Provides for safer pedestrian travel		Does not require a cross-walk
Provides sidewalk access to Village businesses		
Retains ability to park on East side		
Provides limited handicap accessibility		

	<u>CONS</u>	
<u>Option 1</u>		<u>Option 2</u>
Construction can impact private property		No parking on either side
Requires cross-walk which could mitigate traffic		Does not provide sidewalk access to Village zone businesses
May require building some retaining walls where property is higher than sidewalk		Potential loss of Maple trees

Provides very limited handicap accessibility

Does not provide for handicap accessibility

Option 1 is far more desirable than Option 2 for the following reasons:

1. Option 2 does not do anything to resolve all the safety issues associated with the massive ditch on the West side. Option 1 (with the recommended changes) is a much safer option for pedestrian travel.
2. Since both options provide for water drainage, they are basically equal. However, Option 2 does not address the ineffective drainage on the West side while improved drainage on the East side may reduce the basement flooding somewhat on that side. And Option 2 will likely compromise the stately Maple trees on the East side due to digging for the drainage line.
3. By providing for parking instead of an esplanade, Option 1 becomes much more desirable than Option 2. Option 2 precludes any parking on both sides and would result in delivery trucks parking in a travel lane while delivering. Having shoulders for parking on both sides available for temporary parking is a strong benefit for Option 1.
4. By providing sidewalk access to the Village zone buildings, Option 1 would provide continuation of their handicap facilities already in place which makes it better than Option 2 which does nothing to support handicap access to those buildings..
5. No estimated cost information was provided. Much of the cost of either option is in construction of the drainage and the sidewalk and the cost of each should be quite similar. So the decision on which option should be selected should be based solely on the relative merits of each. In addition, maintenance and repair have consumed considerable taxpayer assets in the past 25 years and there is no reason to expect these costs to the town will not continue. Thus, Option 1 would eliminate these expenses and likely would pay for itself with the avoided costs.
6. Option 1 Modification. A modified version of the above Option 1 is feasible with the following changes.
 - a. Terminate the sidewalk on the West side at the Poulin driveway. There is no need for the sidewalk to go to the water district.
 - b. Place the crosswalk at a point between the Guimont and Poulin driveways. This provides better crosswalk sight lines.
 - c. At the East side terminus of the crosswalk, begin the sidewalk to the fairgrounds. Any East side underground drainage can be directed to the under road drain line at the Morrow property.
 - d. Consider developing the side walk on the East side with parking similar to option 1. This would provide overflow fairgrounds parking on ball game days. Presently, vehicles are parked in the road.
7. Based on Option 1 being far better, no more effort should be expended with engineering Option 2.