

# Halls Road Committee

## Gets Go-ahead from Finance for Masterplan

<https://lctexaminer.com/2020/10/22/halls-road-committee-gets-go-ahead-...>

The approval came at the board's Tuesday night meeting, a day after the Board of Selectmen approved the project with a "not to exceed \$48,000" stipulation.

Edie Twining, chair of the committee, and Kurt Prochorena, an engineer at BSC Group, which won the job with a bid of \$46,500, presented the seven-page proposal, which includes the development of updated base mapping using existing town GIS and assessment data, 2016 orthophotography and Light Detection and Ranging (LIDAR) data from the State of Connecticut and mapping from the Department of Transportation.

BSC has subcontracted with Bartram & Cochran of Hartford to provide a real estate market analysis for use in creating the master plan. BSC will also perform a market assessment that will include an evaluation of the housing, retail and commercial sectors and create a matrix containing projections of possible redevelopment programs considered "reasonably feasible within a 10-year period."

The proposal does not include land or boundary surveying, wetlands delineation or environmental assessments, detailed property mapping, public meetings or presentations, detailed design or specifications for specific projects, or legal work. It also does not include intrusive investigations for locating subsurface utilities, test pits or subsurface conditions.

"This master plan looks at all the parts and then the master plan creates that road map using all the data collected during the process to create the design standards and the zoning with the hopes that once those things are in place you can attract some private development whether it be new businesses, enhanced businesses or added residential components. Ultimately the goal is to attract private developers," said Prochorena. "This presents that road map in a comprehensive manner to guide what happens out there over next 10 or 15 years."

Board of Finance member David Kelsey said he was concerned that the proposal did not contain a timetable to achieve the "low hanging fruit" projects, including sidewalks and signage. He said he would be disappointed if nothing had changed in two years.

Kelsey also said he was concerned about potential unintended consequences of the masterplan that could, for example, result in a loss of flexibility for private property owners by requiring setbacks of 10 feet from the road for new construction.

"That's my soap box," Kelsey said. "The money is carryover money so I'm happy to engage and see what BSC comes up with, but I really, really, really feel strongly that there should be first and foremost a time table and set expectations after we go through what is basically a done deal with the \$50,000."

Several members of the Board of Finance, including chair Andy Russell, Kelsey and alternate Jude Read asked why the proposal was not provided to the board in advance of the meeting, given that the information was complex and dense.

"It's challenging to be handed something in a meeting," Russell said. "On the other hand, it is your committee, it meets the scope and you've looked at three versions of this. The bottom line is, this is what you think needs to be done at this point and this is the price to get it done. •• We might have had better questions if we had seen this in advance."

Russell said even though the board had only just seen the proposal, it was clear the money was already in the budget for the Halls Road Improvement Committee.

"Having just received this tonight is challenging but to Mr. Kelsey's point, it is in carryover for \$48,000 and this proposal is for \$46,500," he said.

Finance member B.J. Bemblum objected to a quick vote on the funding, but ultimately the board voted unanimously to approve the funding, except Kelsey who abstained because he said he owns property in the Halls Road corridor.