

TOWN OF SNOWMASS VILLAGE

PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

December 14, 2022

Members Present:

Brian Marshack, Chairman
Matthew Dube, Vice Chairman
Jim Gustafson
Stan Clauson
Doug Faurer
Elese Denis

Staff Present:

Dave Shinneman
Brian McNellis
Sara Nester
Adam Olson
Clint Kinney
Sam Guarino
John Carlin

Members Absent:

Others Present:

Matt Gwost
Jay Schumaaker

Item 1: Snowmass Transit Center – Site Visit:

Brian Marshack, Chair, started the conversation by stating that this would be a site visit and an official public meeting. Sam Guarino, Transportation Director, will give a tour of the proposed project. There are to be no public comments until the group has returned to Town Hall. This is a time for commissioners to comment and discuss things amongst themselves.

The first location that was visited was the top of the elevator tower; the second was the top of the buildings. The group stood at the RFTA depot and saw the top of the column. They also looked at the road and went to lot five to look at the retaining wall. Sam provided updated renderings, toured lot five, and discussed the potential landscaping. He also provided additional screening options and discussed this with board members.

Once this tour was completed, there was a regular meeting and public comment in Town Hall, Council Chambers.

This meeting was adjourned at 3:23 PM.

















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Staff Present:

Dave Shinneman
Brian McNellis
Sara Nester
Anne Martens
Clint Kinney
John Dresser
Betsy Crum

Members Absent:

Others Present:

Matt Gwost
Jay Schumaaker

Call to order: The meeting was called to order at 3:45 p.m. by Brian Marshack, Chairman.

Item 1: Approval of December 7, 2022 Meeting Minutes:

The Minutes from the 12/7/22 meeting were brought up for approval. Stan Clauson made a motion to approve, second by Elesé Denis and approved unanimously.

Item 2: Special Review Application – Continued: Brian McNellis, Senior Planner, started the conversation by introducing the agenda item summary. The only change from last week is the recommendation for the consideration of the draft PC resolution 5. There is also a new referral letter from the fire district. The resolution includes conditions, and we are happy to add or take away any of the recommendations.

Sam Guarino, Transportation Director, introduced Matt Gwost, General Contractor for the Transit Center project. Sam reviewed what was discussed at the site visit. The first location that we saw was the top of the elevator tower; the second location was the top of the buildings. The group stood at the RFTA depot and saw the top of the column; they also looked at the road and went to lot five to look at the retaining wall.

Sam mentioned that they worked on some updated renderings to show what the potential landscaping could be in lot five. He feels that we could include quite a bit more landscaping by redesigning the parking lot, which is being worked on now. There are additional screening options provided with a recessed screening. He showed a couple of screening options of what it would look like partially and fully screened.

Jim Gustafson (Gus) mentioned that at the previous meeting there was discussion about how they could eliminate pedestrian/bus traffic conflicts. He still has concerns about safety with the concept of the island in the middle where pedestrians must cross in front of busses.

Sam responded by saying that safety remains their biggest concern. He mentioned that they had the same idea as him, but once they looked at things closer and saw the turning movements of the bus, it wouldn't work. The raised crosswalk with only bus traffic going through it, is a very safe option. We will know where the pedestrians are going to cross, and there is a speedbump to slow buses down. The drivers are trained to assume that pedestrians aren't paying attention. This sort of platform occurs quite frequently. There is Ruby Park, 27th Street, and Civic Center in Denver. He would argue that this is safer than the others mentioned, as there is one spot where they are coming across. The other stations have multiple spots.

Gus mentioned that the current transit center is a mess, and anything that is done will be better, but he wants us to use this opportunity to make it the best it can be.

Sam responded that they want to make this as perfect as they can. If safety improvements need to be made, staff wants to make them.

Gus asked if we had looked at an alternative to put the RFTA loading on the sides where pedestrians don't have to cross buses, counterclockwise flow, buses loading on the outside, no center island, cut back on the amount of structure, and shuttle bus loading from Lower Carriage Way at a level below where the lot six parking lot replacement is located. An escalator could be added that would connect the two levels. This would totally separate the pedestrians from the bus flow.

Clint Kinney, Town Manager, responded that we are happy to add comments to the approval. We are trying to make this as safe as possible, and we think that this is it. The escalator was part of an approval decades ago. It required a lot more retaining wall and had a lot more parking garage structure with it. The direction that we got from Town Council is to keep it as small and compact as possible while being as safe as possible.

Dave Shinneman, Community Development Director, commented that when staff looks at this from a Special Review Application, we looked at minimizing adverse impacts. Safety is the primary importance. One of the recommendations within the resolution that was provided tonight, talked about railings or planters to direct patrons into the crosswalk. We looked at this plan from the standpoint whether there is space for the buses to get around on the platform. This is the primary reason they went from the outside to the inside. We also looked at environmental impacts. When you can reduce the platform size, you do reduce the encroachment into the Brush Creek environmental area. From a parking standpoint, our goal was to lose as few spaces as possible.

Stan Clauson asked if we have any type of site plan or rendering that shows the buses staged at the various locations?

Sam shared this per Stan's request.

Stan commented that this is a condition that is not very different from what occurs at the RFTA stop currently. Some buses stop away from the platform, and people cross to get to the bus. This is the current condition. He asked if there have been any accidents or issues related to this.

Sam responded that he's sure that people have slipped and fallen on the icy road, but he isn't aware of any other incidents, but can't be sure because he doesn't work for RFTA.

Stan said that he thinks this works with the clockwise movement. He understands that a counterclockwise movement would require quite a bit more sidewalk and loading space. He understands the point, but he thinks that we have a substantial amount of safety built in with the identified crosswalks.

Stan asked to see a site plan that shows the actual road and parking lot configuration for lot five. He mentioned that at the last meeting, he asked if perhaps the single loaded aisle closest to the Transit Center and Snowmelt Road was eliminated, to allow for more landscaping.

Clint commented that with the time they were given, they couldn't complete an update plan showing this, but it is something that they want to consider. He recommended listing this as a condition.

Matthew Dube, Vice Chairman, echoed Stan's comments about the wall. He also has concerns about the viability of the landscaping. There was also discussion about breaking up the wall mass using terracing technique. He is wondering if this has been taken off the table, or if this is something that we can look at.

Matt Gwost, Contractor, commented that terracing the road creates a couple of issues. The first issue is that it will skinny up the road itself. It constrains and constricts the Transit Center itself. We can look at other aesthetics to buffer it up, but there is obviously a price point to whatever direction we want to head towards. This can be added as a condition, and we can look at pricing to fit the budget.

Clint asked Matt to speak to what is under the road to hold it up.

There are huge caissons which are three foot wide and drilled down to bedrock. There are counterforts which are anchored down into the hill, and fill is provided to get up to the road. This whole system must work concurrently together. If this starts to be modified, there is a ripple effect through the design.

Matthew commented that the counter wall looks out of place – it reminds him of something you'd see in a larger city. He gets that the road construction is driving how the wall is designed, but it is huge.

Else Denis agrees with what everyone has said. The Comprehensive Plan is to preserve Snowmass Village's unique character. A big, huge cement wall doesn't do this. She understands the engineering requirements of this, but to her, this doesn't change possibly putting a condition on the aesthetic requirement to it to make it blend better.

Doug Faurer agrees. He would like to see a variety of landscaping. Aspen trees only have leaves on them four or five months out of the year. If something could be done to soften year-round, like Spruce or Evergreen. He isn't a fan of the wall. He wouldn't want to see this in Base Village, or in the mall area. It is out of place.

Stan commented that given the design, the grade differential is unavoidable. The structural wall can be carried all the way down, then in front of it, add a secondary wall. The stone facing would only be needed in the upper portion of the main wall, then you could stone face the wall in front of it. The other alternative would be to take the single wall as shown and put a variety of landscaping in such a way that softens it.

Matthew asked if it would be possible to build a wall as shown, but in front, skin it with some heavy-duty planter boxes. It would be an interior wall with a planter system built into the wall.

Brian Marshack commented that the wall is half of the equation. It's a huge wall and stands out like a sore thumb from all viewpoints. His biggest problem with the design is that there is a parking garage with zero setback overhangs, and zero landscaping, it's just very urban and cold. Pulling the road back or

going heavy on the landscaping would help with masking the garage. Pulling the siding back was great, it softens it. At the same time, it is still massive on the top. Can we put landscaping on the top to soften it more?

Gus commented that he agrees with Brian's comments. He feels that this design has an urban look to it. We need to figure out a way to soften it.

Sam commented that there will be landscaping on both sides.

Brian Marshack commented that we really need to start thinking about what defines a sense of place. Landscaping has a lot to do with this. We are in the mountains, and yes, this is a transit center, but we need to do something unique and softer. We want to make sure that we don't have a sea of concrete and asphalt. We need to get this right.

Doug asked if there had been any consideration on a topic. Instead of rerouting Lower Carriage Way through lot six, upper part five. Keeping it as is but moving everything up the mountain and re-routing Upper Carriage Way through the merchant's lot. Going in this direction may provide more ground to work with.

Clint responded that yes, they did look at this option. There would still be steps up and down from the mall, and there would still be a grade issue. The design that the town went with provides a flat ground when passengers get off the bus.

Stan brought up a question about the sidewalk and what its use will be.

Sam responded that it would connect to Upper Brush Creek Road. We are currently in the process of adding a pedestrian walkway, and the town has moved the striping so pedestrians can walk through. It's really about the connection to the employee housing for Mountain View and Creekside. This provides them a connection to the mall.

Stan stated that he feels that this is a beneficial plan. If you saw people walking through the Transit Center today, there was one narrow path that seemed to be shoveled or snow melted. It is a steep area to walk in with ski boots on to the Transit Center. The new design will be a great benefit. The plan does need more attention to the spacial separation of roadways and retaining walls to incorporate more screening. If we could craft a resolution around this, we could move it forward.

Matthew prepared some remarks. "He thinks the project will solve several transit problems, but we need to address the design.

I want to make sure we remain focused on our big picture work of creating a welcoming public building that we can admire. I heard a council member say earlier this year, “Hopefully we’ll have at the end of the day a transit center that the community can be proud of.”

What I took this to mean is that the design of this important project connects with people, creates a sense of place and reflects the self-image of the community. Of course, all the logistical criteria need to be met. In my opinion, the facility, as designed, is a bit generic – it could be anywhere and is short on an identity. (Note: this comment relates to the two buildings.)

I think it’s important to look at the design and think about how it could really relate to more of our town through materials, a sense of playfulness and an interesting use of form and light. Town Hall and the Recreation Center are examples. There is a variety of materials and there are elements of visual interest that engage the eye. The massing looks at home in the surrounding landscape - there is a harmony of each building and site. My hope is that these comments can encourage a shift in direction so that we can recommend a truly great design to Town Council.

Doug thanked Matthew for his comments and agrees completely.

Brian Marshack commented that he takes the bus often, and just being on the site visit today reminded him that taking the bus in the winter is a cold miserable experience. He asked why there isn’t indoor seating, or heated seats with overhangs.

Sam responded that there will be space heaters under the overhangs. Part of the reason that the buildings aren’t bigger, is because we need pedestrian queuing space. The other reason is that yes, it is cold, but 300 days of the year it is sunny. The current Village bus stop is cold and dark 365 days of the year. We wanted to take the opportunity to make this more blue skies and sunny than it is cold.

Brian Marshack brought up the shuttle buses from the hotel – he thinks it would be a mistake to just make it exclusive for public transit. He asked if there is a way that we can incorporate stop and go shuttle buses.

Sam responded and said on the platform with this design, no. We do think that we will be able to use our current Daly Lane depot for shuttle buses.

Clint responded that if we could find out that this could be done safely operationally, this is something that we could provide for in the future.

Gus commented that the lower level could be more formalized for an actual drop-off zone for shuttle vans. There is perpendicular parking that could

possibly be converted in the future. It might be an important enough feature that it should be planned for now. An escalator instead of an elevator could provide for more lighting as well.

Matthew asked if an escalator had been considered in lieu of an elevator.

Clint responded, no, we must think of ADA.

Matthew suggested an elevator lift.

Clint said if we looked this, he doesn't remember.

Brian Marshack opened for public comment.

Jay Shumaaker, member of the public, provided a detailed presentation and slideshow of what he sees as a better design for the proposed Transit Center.

Brian Marshack asked if we have looked at other alternatives. The thought process of re-developing, is this something that was studied initially?

Clint responded; you mean where the Transit Center is? The only formal proposal that has come up is in the Housing Master Plan we talked about taking the Snowmass Inn and somehow utilizing the vacant space that Jay showed next to the Snowmass Inn and utilizing the right of way. When we did this analysis, it is the most expensive least efficient use of the area. The adjacent property owners approached us and said, if the transit center moved forward, we would love to look at the opportunity for redevelopment of that building.

Brian Marshack requested to see the 3-D model at the next meeting. The commission would also like to see how the retaining wall would look from Brush Creek coming to Carriage Way.

Stan commented that he's familiar with SEH as a highway engineering firm. He is not familiar with SEH as an architectural firm. He's wondering in light of concern with the buildings, and the sense of arrival, if we would consider mutually the possibility of putting out an RFP for the actual buildings that would allow us to have some opportunity to see if different conceptual ideas as to how these buildings could really create a special sense of arrival.

Clint commented that we already have a contract with SEH. We could probably do this, but he suggested adding conditions to make it more welcoming etc. Clint said that the commission needs to have specific conditions rather than saying the design needs to be changed.

Brian Marshack asked for more detail on the lower level at the next meeting.

Stan asked if it would be possible to have the landscape architecture representatives at the next meeting.

Item 3: Community Development Director Updates:

- There will not be a public hearing required for this. If questions come up, we will let them know that this will be continued on the January 4 agenda.
- We have heard from Deerbrook, and they are going to request an extension of time for their submittal. This will be brought to council for consideration in January.
- Building 10AB has been submitted to us, and staff is doing their completeness review now. Planning Commission will not be looking at this.

This meeting was adjourned at 5:48 PM.