

Memo 9 March 2024

To: Mayor and Town Council

From: Georgette Cole, Planning Commission Chair

Subject: Planning Commission Recommendation Regarding Request to Asphalt an Additional Portion of 6th Avenue

The Planning Commission evaluated this request at our March 6 meeting. We reviewed all portions of the 2022 Comprehensive Plan which cover the walkways. In addition, thanks to the assistance of Kathy Lehman, all pertinent previous actions on the “local access” portion of 6th Avenue were located and reviewed.

The authorized use of 6th Avenue for local access is well documented in letters and the Town Council minutes from 1969, 1973, and 2017. PDFs of these documents can be provided if needed. Three parameters confirmed in the Council minutes are:

- 1) No vehicle may be parked, except for loading and unloading, on or adjacent to this roadway in a manner which could prevent access by town or emergency vehicles;
- 2) Pedestrian rights retain ascendancy over vehicular rights;
- 3) This section retains all other aspects of a restricted walkway.

The 2022 Comprehensive Plan refers to the walkways in multiple sections especially in Section 3) Transportation where it says: “The original plan for Washington Grove, developed by its founders in the late 19th Century, established a concept of pedestrian walkways separated from vehicular ways, and interspersed with numerous parks and open spaces. The streetscape, comprised of alternating streets and pedestrian walkways, with the Circle anchoring its center, is a remarkably intact reminder of Washington Grove’s camp meeting period. Its “avenues” are grass or gravel covered and reserved for pedestrians only, while vehicles are directed to streets that are its “roads.”

This layout and pedestrian walkways are contributing elements cited for inclusion of the Town on the National Register of Historic Places. This legacy must continue to be protected and preserved for future generations.”

The Planning Commission concluded that neither asphalt nor crush-and-run should be used on a walkway, especially in the radial layout of the original tent district, as these materials are not consistent with retaining/preserving the historic integrity of the area.

However, the Planning Commission also understands the concerns of the residents at 407 5th Avenue regarding the lack of surface maintenance on 6th Avenue. The comprehensive plan includes the recommendation 3.1 (a) “Continue to maintain walkways within the developed areas of Town, allow a sense of public ownership, invite pedestrian use, and ensure year-round emergency vehicle access.” The Planning Commission concluded that regular maintenance with the traditional hard-pack dirt and walkway gravel to improve the surface would be appropriate as well as helpful for both pedestrians and the local vehicular access which is permitted on this portion of the avenue.