

Halls Road Improvements Committee

Community Update

Spring, 2023

On March 27 the Old Lyme Zoning Commission voted 3-2 in favor of creating the Halls Road Overlay District (HROD). Because the Planning Commission had previously given the HROD a ‘negative referral,’ it required a 4-1 vote to pass, and the measure failed. The HROD is a significant piece of zoning regulation. It takes significant effort to understand the details. Many of the objections raised were covered by parts of the HROD proposal that apparently were not noticed or were misunderstood. With the support of the Board of Selectmen and the heads of the commissions, we plan to reapply, and to do a better job of explaining the proposal in detail, and answering the objections raised.

The challenges that prompted the effort to make changes along Halls Road still face us. We need to acknowledge the changing business climate and support our retail businesses in the new environment of the coming decades. The people of Old Lyme want a safer, more attractive, walkable, bike-able, mixed-use town center where they can live, work, and shop. Smaller-scale housing remains in short supply, and Halls Road is one place where it could be built without using up the remaining open space. Old Lyme is planning major investments in public improvements, but the Halls Road area also needs *to be allowed the option* to change for the better. Restricting Halls Road to “commercial only” now tends to favor highway services over all other uses—a thing that no one wants. Guiding our future is an important matter for Old Lyme. The HROD creates the *option* for a better future.

In the area of improvements to public infrastructure, the town has hired A. I. Engineers (AIE) to proceed with design development of a new pedestrian/cyclist bridge and trails safely connecting our main commercial district on Halls Road with our Arts District and historic town center on Lyme Street. The bulk of the funding for this project is from the ARPA grant awarded last June. In February of this year we also applied for a small grant under the CT Recreational Trails Program to support the bridge and trails. HRIC and the Town will work on required easements and rights-of-way. The work of AIE on the project will include an economic analysis, site survey and assessment, and geo-tech investigation leading to preliminary phased designs. AIE will produce three options (with cost estimates) for creating the bridge and trails. AIE’s work will be available for public review, and a final design selected.

Once a final design is approved, AIE will create full construction documents (CDs) for the bridge and trails, and detail the project’s permitting requirements. The CDs will also be used to seek grants to cover the construction costs of the project. AIE will assist in seeking grants, and manage the bidding to move the project to the construction phase.

Last year the BSC Group helped Old Lyme apply for a grant under CT-DOT’s Local Transportation Capital Improvement Program (LOTCIP). The grant could cover a substantial part of the construction costs for the main improvements planned for sidewalks, lighting, landscaping, etc. along Halls Road. (The bridge and trails are a separate matter, from CT-DOT’s point of view.) Our LOTCIP application is also the first formal review of our plans by CT-DOT, and we must wait for their approval to proceed on this part of the plan. The LOTCIP program has many applicants and the waiting list for review is long. This is Old Lyme’s first request under LOTCIP, and we hope to see some action on our application in 2024.

We appreciate your interest in the future of Halls Road and Old Lyme.

Contact us at: hallsroadcommittee@oldlyme-ct.gov