

Woodstock Village Conservancy volunteers propose making renovations at The Green

By Emma Stanton
Staff Writer

The Woodstock Village Conservancy presented a plan to the Woodstock Selectboard on Tuesday, April 15, seeking support for their proposed project to restore the Village Green and create a safer, more pedestrian-friendly space on the surrounding roadways.

In the first part of the presentation, Wendy Spector of the Woodstock Village Conservancy explained why they wish to renovate The Green. Spector, who is a leading figure in the all-volunteer group, explained to the Standard, “The Green is a central and iconic space in the village, and yet it lacks intentionality in its design. It is not sustainably managed, nor is it nearly as accessible as it should be. There is a lack of connection with other green spaces in town, and The Green harbors unsafe roads for cars, bikes, and pedestrians.”

The group hoped to get the selectboard’s blessing to continue pursuing the project, which will include recruiting volunteers, raising funds, and applying for grants. “We recognize that the town and the village has no money, and even though you’ve had ideas of what you’ve wanted to do, this has always been an issue,” Spector said at the meeting. “So what we propose is that we will seek grants and private donations to get some of this work done. We know that elected officials and staff have no time, so we’re proposing to mobilize volunteers to do the work. We know that change is hard, so we propose to gather the facts to educate the public about the problems and seek their input to identify improvements. What we are looking for from you is just your support. We don’t want to burden you. We want to make life easier for you. So we propose to explore restoration — meaning intentional designs — and financing the restoration of The Green.”

The board granted that preliminary approval.

Spector went on to present historic photos to the selectboard at the meeting, showing what The Green looked like in the 1800s before vehicles circled the perimeter. “We don’t want to necessarily return to The Green of 1870,” Spector said, “But we would like to find a way to bridge the old with the new to keep what works and



During the summer, The Green plays host to the weekly “Market on the Green.”

Courtesy of Wendy Spector

find solutions for the aspects of that space that are not sustainable for the health and wellness of the community.”

Spector says the identifiable issues that could be addressed include: the fact that replanting has been undermined by insufficient watering and lack of aeration, leading to compaction and pooling; the iron fence is rusted; and the shed, benches, and tables have been poorly maintained over the years. Spector says the goal is to create intentional, accessible, and sustainable renovations that solve these issues and create an aesthetically pleasing, safe, and usable space for tourists and residents alike.

If approved, the renovation would likely take place next spring.

The second component of the Woodstock Village Conservancy presentation addressed the safety issues on the portions of Route 4 surrounding The Green, especially for pedestrians, bicyclists, and

drivers. Mike Green, who will be spearheading this portion of the initiative, told the Standard, “The Village Corridor Project is not just about The Green, but to make sure that the entire village is safe and efficient for pedestrians and bicyclists. A recent study on cyclist tourism found that tens of thousands of cyclists come through Woodstock each year, parking down at the trailhead, the East End Park, and South Woodstock. The study found that there is no easy way for cyclists to get from these areas to the downtown corridor. One of our priorities will be to install appropriate signage and infrastructure — bike lanes, crosswalks, and ‘share the road’ signs. Our goal is to make Woodstock safer for visitors and residents.”

Another component to this proposal, Green mentioned, regards the safety of children. “The children of Woodstock need to be able to safely ride their bikes to and from school. Woodstock Elementary promotes cycling safety and advocacy days, but our town does not currently have adequate support for our children. Something needs to change,” he said.

Cyclists are not the only priority. The Woodstock Village Conservancy is also proposing modifications to the sidewalks, making them longer, wider, and more connected in the village to create a safer walking path for pedestrians. In addition to this, a vehicular audit would be conducted around the roadways to make the ambiguous two-lane system more clearly defined and safer for drivers. Parking is also an issue that the Woodstock Village Conservancy hopes to remedy.

To address these problems and begin the process of implementing solutions, Green will be conducting an audit of vehicle, bicycle, and pedestrian safety this spring, while the Woodstock Village Conservancy awaits grant funding. Green concluded, “Our plan is quite simple. The first step is to be aware of the issue, the second is to become educated on town infrastructure, the third is to find solutions and resources, and the fourth is to come together to form a smart plan of action. I feel as though the Woodstock Village Conservancy has intentionally completed each of these four steps. The only thing left to do now is get to work!”