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Bethany takes another look at streetscape

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BETHANY BEACH -- Town officials have decided to take another look at a project that would revitalize Garfield Parkway between Route 1 and the boardwalk.

The streetscape project, which began in 2002, has been on hold since 2006, according to Phil Boesch, a former member of the town's Beautification Committee. Work on the project took a temporary hiatus after committee members deemed it necessary to further review plans and investigate aspects of possible improvements.

"(The streetscape has) gone through a number of permutations," Bethany Beach Town Manager Cliff Gravier said. "There were a number of concepts presented. The town has gone as far as to send each and every individual homeowner a packet of information on (project)."

Multiple designs were created to address town parking, bike lanes and sidewalk widths. In addition, utility poles -- described as "eyesores" by some town representatives -- could be removed.

Officials said Delmarva Power, who owns and maintains the poles along Garfield Parkway, estimated the cost of removing the poles from the sidewalks at \$560,000.

The poles also carry Verizon telephone lines, which would also need to be placed elsewhere. Sandy Arnette, spokeswoman for Verizon in Delaware and Maryland, said the company had been contacted in years past regarding replacement of the phone lines.

"We've quoted city officials ballpark figures for several years," she said. "The last time we talked with Bethany Beach was in August of 2006. There was no response from them. We have to take time out to design and price the job and we have to know exactly what the (town) wants. (They have) sent us several different scenarios of what they want over the years."

Within the different incarnations of the streetscape project that have surfaced are plans that called for widened sidewalks and the elimination of bike lanes. One idea was the possibility of limiting traffic to one lane instead of the two lanes that currently exist on Garfield Parkway, with town officials hoping traffic would siphon off to other east-west streets.

Bethany Beach Mayor Carol Olmstead said that concept had been scrapped due to traffic concerns and would not be explored again.

While officials still aren't sure what the street scape will eventually consist of, Gravier said he believed any future improvements to Garfield Parkway would also require the sidewalks along the parkway to be compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

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