

# Trustees back benches, mural, but make no decision on frames

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“Decorative motifs on the frames will be inspired by American Colonial furniture designs ... and will harmonize with the Village aesthetic.”

Two design options exist for the 8-foot metal art frames: One with a clamshell-like peak, and the other with a more-rounded top.

Lewiston Council on the Arts Executive Director Maria Fortuna Dean presented new digital slides to the capacity crowd inside the Morgan Lewis Village Boardroom.

She said, “I just want to take a moment to clarify the role of the Lewiston Council on the Arts in this entire process. The plans and designs for the various elements of this project have been in discussion (with the mayor’s citizen art committee) since before the pandemic. At the July and August Village Board meetings, the plans and designs for the public art project were presented, including the mural, benches and the art frames. All were approved by the trustees. It was at this point, after that approval, that the mayor asked me to write the grant application for the Greenway funding.”

“The LCA is only the agency through which the village decided to apply for funding. I enthusiastically agreed to write the application for the funding, because the public art project is in line with our mission to support and advocate for the arts in Lewiston.”

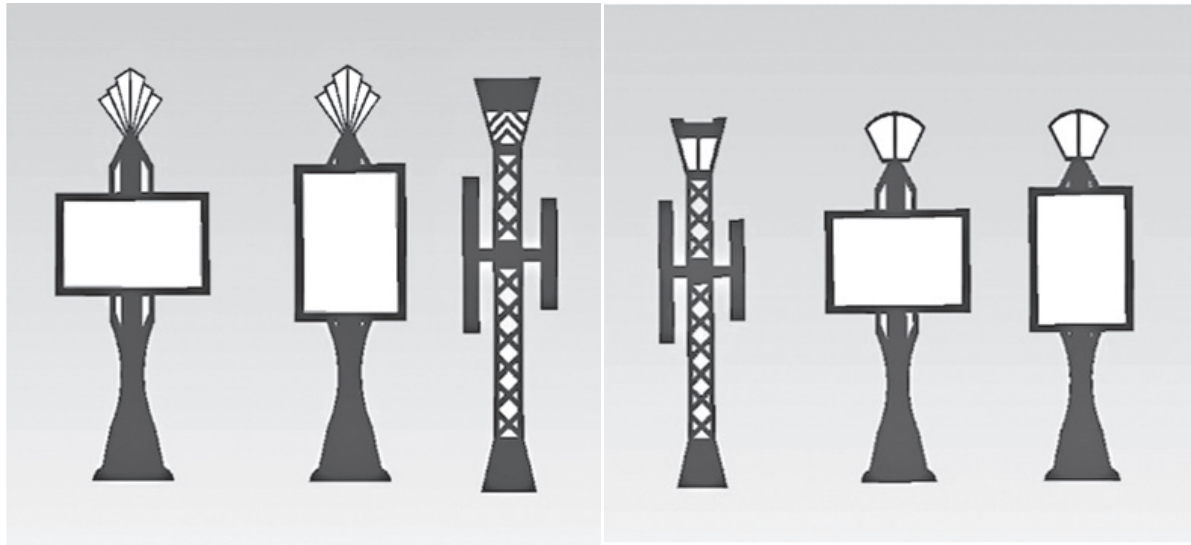
“Should the funding be obtained, the mayor requested and the LCA agreed to facilitate the curating of the art exhibits, and any future programming and activities associated with it, such as events for gallery openings, speakers series, educational programming, field trips, etc.”

Dean added, “Displaying the frames all together along the brick walk would create a cohesive outdoor gallery, enabling participants to experience the artwork as a whole. Programming and activities connected to the exhibits could take place in Academy Park, revitalizing this underused asset, and bringing it regularly into the center of village life.”

“The Lewiston Council on the Arts supports this proposed project, because it reflects our mission of promoting opportunities for artists, and encouraging public participation in the arts. We see the potential benefits for Lewiston, including the possibilities of collaboration between community groups such as Lew-Port school students, the VFW, the Garden Club, and the Historical Association of Lewiston.”

Lee Simonson, representing the citizen De-Sign Committee, said, “While our members can speak for themselves, I can tell you that the initial reaction to the revised plans are generally negative.”

He shared a series of letters suggesting as much, and noted, “My



Two metal frame options were presented. (Renderings by Dan Buttery)



Residents listen to new “Lewiston Public Art Project” details.

personal opinion is that having 10 of these towers in Academy Park is overkill. My concerns also involve taking up precious green space at the park because, once it’s gone, it’s gone. It will permanently restrict the future use of the park.

“In addition, I understand that the artworks in the frames will be illuminated all night. That’s certainly not something that a historic community would do.”

Other residents asked if the number of frames could be reduced, and if some could be displayed in other areas of the village. Trustees suggested a few signs could be relocated to Hennepin Park, the International Peace Garden and/or to the waterfront.

### Benches and Mural

The “Lewiston Public Art Project’s” other two components are less contentious.

LCA further defined the plan for the benches, with suggested locations at:

- √ Academy Park at South Ninth and Center streets (a new location)
- √ Outside of Northwest Bank, near the clock tower at North Fifth and Center streets

√ Lewiston Landing, on Water and Center streets

The proposal states, “shuttle benches will be located at three stops in Lewiston for the Discover Niagara Shuttle. They are tastefully designed to complement the existing street aesthetic; their deep blue color references the Niagara River and the Discover Niagara shuttle logo identifies the shuttle stops for visitors who are seeking them out.”

Trustee Nick Conde and Historian Russ Piper said they didn’t like the blue color, but no decision was made to change the benches’ appearance.

The “Lewiston Public Art Project” also calls for a Maureen Kellick-designed mural wrapping the Academy Park comfort station. This element of the new proposal is similar to what was previously presented.

Here, the LCA states, “The collaborative concept of the four-wall Mural at Academy Park is a sweeping, continuous image reflecting the Niagara River’s abundant orchards, vineyards, and farmland, and the wildlife along

the River. In addition to the mural, metal sculptural components ... will provide visitors, cyclists, and residents with photo ops on all four sides of the building as they pause at this crucial rest stop along the Shoreline Trail. A custom bike rack adjacent to the south wall allows trail riders to safely store their bikes while they explore Lewiston.”

### Project Costs and Greenway Connection

LCA estimated the initial cost of the “Lewiston Public Art Project” to be \$153,533. That included:

- √ \$60,000 for 10 metal frames
- √ \$15,000 for three benches
- √ \$15,000 for mural metal work
- √ \$10,813 for the mural

The Village of Lewiston was asked to provide a one-time contribution of \$813, as well as \$52,720 of in-kind labor and materials for an “8-foot wide (paved) path from Academy Park entrance at 9th and Cayuga St to Mural and around plaza that includes Welcome Center and Toll Booth.”

Mayor Anne Welch said the DOT would reimburse the village’s in-kind expenses.

The “Lewiston Public Art Project” has received \$10,000 from the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area, the agency that operates the Discover Niagara Shuttle.

The art council initially sought \$90,000 in Niagara River Greenway funding.

To receive that money, the LCA would need sponsorship from the Town of Lewiston, a member of the Host Communities Standing Committee.

Last week Thursday, the town voted to endorse the mural and benches, but not the frames, for a total of \$30,000.

Following the village meeting, Dean said a new Greenway proposal would be submitted, with requests for just those two project components.

With regard to line items for metal frame annual maintenance and artwork digitization (\$2,000 total), Dean said those fees would be removed.

Welch noted art in Academy Park would serve to benefit bike riders on the Empire State Trail – a statewide project of the Niagara River Greenway.

That entity has offered to pay for enhancements to Academy Park that would tie-in with the existing bike path (Seneca and Ninth streets), and a potential extension from the park to Cayuga Street and out to River Road.

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