

Town Committee on Squibnocket

Draft Minutes

July 8, 2014

Chilmark Town Hall Selectmen's Meeting Room

8am

Present: Jim Malkin (Chair), Allison Burger, Steve Flanders, Billy Meegan, Jane Slater, Ron Rappaport (*ex officio*)

Also Present: Charles Parker, Warren Spector, Margaret Maida, Barbara Lee, David Damroth, Chris Murphy, Virginia Dawson, Wendy Jeffers, Barbara Goldmuntz, Dave Dawson, Tony Orphanos, Deborah Hale, Michelle Lasser, Larry Lasser, Edward Miller, Jay Walsh, Celeste Lamson, Kent Damon, Diana Barrett, Bob Lila, John Callagy, Nancy Stork, Ken Iscol, Wendy Weldon, Alex Elvin, Doug Liman, Tom Wallace, Zachary Lee, Martin Hale, *others unspecified*

Minutes of July 1, 2014 were approved.

Data Requests Jim Malkin asked if Committee members had any specific data requests at this time. The available topographic maps of the area have been identified by Chuck Hodgkinson and will be posted on the Squibnocket Project web page.

Friends of Squibnocket: Jim Malkin said that the Committee has received a submission from the Friends of Squibnocket, who have asked to present to the Committee at today's meeting. A summary of the presentation is online, and the full presentation will be made available on the web page shortly.

However, he first wished to pose a question to the representative of the Friends of Squibnocket, Charles Parker: last week, the Town received a copy of a filing to the Massachusetts Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) from a consulting firm working for the Friends of Squibnocket presenting the same Selectmen's plan which had been voted down by Town Meeting. Mr. Parker stated that the filing was not intended as a submission of a formal proposed action, but rather a request for information regarding any particularly environmentally sensitive features, such as endangered species, in the immediate area. Jim Malkin expressed concern that submitting a plan to the State, regardless of the intent, sets up a two- or multi-track process which undermines the process established by Town Meeting in setting up this Committee.

Mr. Parker asked whether the Committee wished him to withdraw the request for information; Jim Malkin stated that that would be appropriate, and asked if the Committee concurs. He assured Mr. Parker that regulatory agencies will be approached at a later stage to obtain the type of information Mr. Parker is seeking. Barring a commitment to withdraw the submission, he would not be prepared to listen to a presentation from the Friends of Squibnocket at this time. Mr. Parker agreed to withdraw the submission.

Mr. Parker presented an Overview of Analytic Effort and Abstract of Work to be Performed. He introduced the Friends of Squibnocket as a voluntary community of neighbors and others who will work

towards alternative approaches to achieve the goals of the Town. The main priority for the Friends is to minimize the environmental impact of activities undertaken to address the questions of access, utilities, beach and parking.

The design principles underlying the solutions sought by the Friends will include: managed retreat from the eroding coastline; removal of all revetments; refraining from establishing "hard" structures; restoring coastal dunes; and retaining natural barrier beaches.

Friends of Squibnocket has engaged a team of four firms, Stephen Roberts Holt Architects, Applied Coastal Research and Engineering, the civil engineering firm Atlantic Design, with general management of the team provided by LEC Environmental Consultants, Inc.

Jim Malkin asked that these firms send their credentials to the Committee.

The issues under review by the Friends' firms include understanding the consequences of revetment removal for the beach and shoreline area where the revetment has been. A geological/coastal engineering assessment is underway, and will yield erosion rates at various transects in the area.

Another issue being studied is a possible dune ridge, with an access road behind it, protected by the ridge. It is not yet clear whether this concept will work: that is why the studies are being undertaken. There are two locations to look at for this idea: one, where the bridge in the previous proposal was planned, and second, somewhat higher up.

An important feature of this work is to separate the access road from the utilities: the utilities can be far better protected and secured for a longer period of time than a road in this dynamic area. A road, in turn, is relatively much easier to repair. A "soft" roadway is consistent with the theory of a managed retreat: it can move back over time as the coastline fluctuates and the Pond fills in behind it. He emphasized that the feasibility of this concept remains to be definitively demonstrated: that is why the Friends have sought the assistance of the firms.

A possible beach parking lot alongside the Pond is being evaluated by the civil engineer. Feasibility of all these concepts depends on two factors: sustainability and consistency with the requirements of the Wetlands Protection Act.

As to the timing of this effort, the work is now getting underway. Mr. Parker asked the Committee when he should be back with results. Jim Malkin noted that the Committee has been given no time limit for its work. The Committee intends to give a progress report to the Special Town Meeting in the fall, and hopes to have a recommendation to go before the Annual Town Meeting in April 2015.

The Committee then discussed other possible examples of dune reconstruction or revetment removal. There is active dune rebuilding being done in New Jersey in the wake of Hurricane Sandy, and it was noted that Duxbury has an extended dune with a road on top of it beyond which are 230 homes relying on this road for their access. The Committee will seek out further information on these and any other relevant precedents that could inform the understanding of the options for Squibnocket. The Committee also noted that the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has recommended that revetments should be removed wherever possible. The Committee would like to see the recommendation from the DEP.

Jane Slater asked Mr. Parker how the work of the Friends' firms is being funded. Mr Parker stated that they have formed an entity, Friends of Squibnocket LLC, and that sufficient funds have been raised from members to cover the proposed work.

Jim Malkin asked that Charles Parker forward a copy of the letter to the DFW withdrawing the filing submitted by the Friends of Squibnocket to the Committee for its records.

Letter from Chris Murphy Chris Murphy was asked to read into the record a letter he had submitted to the Committee explaining his views on the matter of Squibnocket. He stressed that it is critical to separate the road access from the utilities to find an acceptable solution. He also emphasized that the leading issue should be the road access for the homeowners on Squibnocket: once this issue is resolved, the question of beach and parking will follow. Jim Malkin drew attention to the wording of the amendment passed by Town Meeting which gives the Committee its mandate: the amendment makes no such hierarchy of importance in the "two critical issues" of access for homeowners, and bathing beach/parking area. Chris Murphy countered that the Town has a 100-year lease to provide a bathing beach, and ways will be found to have a beach. However "people that live at Squibnocket Point control the Town's relationship with the beach", so if we help solve the access issue, they will be disposed to help solve the beach/parking issue. He cited: if a then b, but you can forget about b if you can't deliver a.

Notifications, invitations, and upcoming meeting: Jim Malkin reported that letters have been sent out to a number of associations and individuals in the area, and emergency responders and town departments from both Chilmark and Aquinnah have been contacted. So far, we've heard back from the Friends of Squibnocket, the Squibnocket Farm Homeowners Association, and Chris Murphy. The Committee encourages people to put forward information and proposals. If we do not have a presentation scheduled for next Tuesday's meeting, we will begin the process of reviewing existing data and topographic maps.

The meeting was adjourned at 09:06.