

Town Committee on Squibnocket

Draft Minutes

August 19, 2014

Chilmark Town Hall Selectmen's Meeting Room

8am

Present: Jim Malkin (Chair), Billy Meegan, Jane Slater, Janet Weidner, Dan Greenbaum

Also Present: David Damroth, Everett Poole, Eve Vincent, Rosalie Hornblower, Chuck Hodgkinson, Chris Murphy, Jay Walsh, Tony Orphanos, Rodney Bunker, Debrah Little, Barbara Lee, Margaret Maida, James Weldon, Wendy Weldon, Alex Elvin, Miles Jaffe, Warren Doty, Bill Rossi, Charles Parker, Susan Regen, Elizabeth Parker, Richard Regen, Martin Hale, Suzy Weisman, Nancy Talbot, Warren Spector, Pamela Bunker, Thomas Bena, Eric Peters

Minutes of July 29, 2014 were adopted as amended.

Video Recordings Jane Slater asked whether video recordings were necessary. She felt video may inhibit presenters and Committee members. Ron Rappaport advised that, under the Open Meeting Law, (MGLc30A, section 20(e)) "After notifying the Chair of the public body, any person may make a video or audio recording of an open session of a public body,... subject to reasonable requirements of the chair as to the number, placement and operation of equipment used so as not to interfere with the conduct of the meeting." The Committee felt that the "pro" of having its sessions available on MVTV to interested people who are unable to attend meetings outweighs the "con" of the camera-effect, potentially eliciting theatrics from extraverts and inhibition of the more modestly-inclined. Selectmen present noted that people tend to become acclimatized to the camera within a short space of time.

Board of Selectmen (BOS) Presentation BOS Chair Bill Rossi presented results of the Selectmen's discussion at a special meeting on Monday, August 18th. Rather than re-iterating the proposal developed by the Board and put before voters at its April Town Meeting, he reviewed the history of the Town's recommendations on Squibnocket going back to the 1985 Master Plan, which was last updated in 2003. The Plan, which was approved by Town voters and provides guidance to the Planning Board in developing and updating Zoning Bylaws for the Town, has long recognized the need for additional beach and pond access for Chilmark residents and the public, including the need for additional parking. He emphasized the following specific features contained in the Master Plan which the Selectmen would like to see addressed in a Squibnocket plan under development in the current Committee on Squibnocket:

- Have the beach parking lot and beach shoreline safely accessible for senior citizens and those with disabilities;
- Solve the parking problem in a manner that improves conditions for all Town resident using the beach and does not require the Squibnocket Farm homeowners or emergency services to drive through the beach parking lot to get to their homes;

- Have an exit plan for removing the current revetment “sea wall” and raised parking lot, restoring the area back to a natural barrier beach and wetland, (including anticipating impacts on Squibnocket Road, the barrier beach, and the pond);
- Provide seasonal rest room facilities for beach patrons;
- Provide safe public boat access to Squibnocket Pond.

He also noted that the BOS had endorsed the plan that had been presented to the April Town Meeting, which had been carefully vetted for feasibility and paid for so as not to burden Town taxpayers. The Board is open to other formulations that address the needs of the Town.

In response to Committee questions, Warren Doty replied that providing boat access to Squibnocket Pond is a State requirement. He also noted that the list of elements presented here are offered to the Committee to facilitate its work: the Board of Selectmen is not actively working on these questions, since the Town Meeting, through its Moderator Everett Poole, has charged the Committee with addressing these issues on behalf of the Town.

Janet Weidner asked for clarification of the duration of availability of the State grant funding for Squibnocket; Chuck Hodgkinson will provide this information.

Squibnocket Project Website: Marina Lent reported that the Squibnocket Project website has been restructured to accommodate the ever-growing number of documents before the Committee. In addition to meeting Agendas and Minutes, six categories have been created to organize the information: Correspondence, Proposals and Supporting Documents, Project Data Sources, Comparative Evaluation of Project Components, Committee Drafts and Reports, and Recordings. These categories will be populated with the existing documents over the coming week, and will be added to as the Committee’s work progresses.

Committee Staffing/Funding Needs: Billy Meegan will update the Committee at the next meeting.

Independent Experts: Jane Slater reported that she has been in contact with two experts at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute (WHOI), a Dr. Walter Barnhardt, Director of the Woods Hole Coastal and Marine Science Center, and Robert Theler (sp?). They are willing to volunteer their time. Jim Malkin will follow up with Jane’s contacts to confirm the Committee’s interest in working with them.

Jim Malkin stated that the Committee will avail itself of experts such as these to sort through and clearly evaluate different proposals, and to separate agreed factual elements from divergent opinions.

Squibnocket Area Natural Resources: Alison Burger will report to the next meeting of the Committee.

Comparable Coastal Projects: Janet Weidner reported that, so far, she has not found comparable projects being done in other communities. She looked at areas in Florida and North Carolina which are vulnerable to storm damage. For the most part, they involve work on a much larger scale. She will continue to look into this.

Evaluation Criteria: Dan Greenbaum will provide evaluation criteria to assess the components of proposals before the Committee. This preparatory work should also serve to identify information that is still needed, and where the Committee will require assistance from experts.

Responses to Committee questions: Martin Hale responded to questions posed to the Squibnocket Farm Homeowners' Association regarding the endpoints of the roadway. The SFHA proposal has chosen possible viaduct alignments to have the abutments located on properties controlled by SFHA. Definitive answers to the other questions posed by the Committee cannot yet be determined, as there are too many undetermined variables at this time. The proposal produced by Haley & Aldrich for the SFHA has taken available information on sea level rise into consideration (ref. "Rationale for Elevated Roadway Solution"). Warren Doty clarified that the reports generated by the town had taken the last 200-year average sea level rise as indicative for the future. The height of the proposed roadway above the existing parking lot will be provided to the Committee. The proposal design took into account the FEMA-designated 100-year flood level.

Warren Doty pointed out that the wording of the question posed to SFHA regarding the cost of "taking" of land did not seem accurate; Martin Hale responded that, indeed, there was no intent in the proposal for there to be any taking of land, rather, what was proposed was *acquisition* of land from the Vineyard Open Land Foundation (VOLF).

Chris Murphy has provided information on the removal of revetments which will be posted on the Squibnocket Project website. Wendy Jeffers requested that David Damroth's paper, "Science Should Change the Nature of the Squibnocket Debate" be placed in the record. It will be available on the Squibnocket Project web page, and is linked to today's agenda.

The next meeting of the Squibnocket Committee will be August 26th 2014 at 8am. It will hear updates from Committee members, a proposal submitted by Tim Rich, and a presentation from the Friends of Squibnocket LLC entitled "Review of Existing Conditions".

The meeting was adjourned at 08:49.