

# Town Committee on Squibnocket

## *Draft Minutes*

August 26, 2014

Chilmark Town Hall Selectmen's Meeting Room

8am

**Present:** Jim Malkin (Chair), Allison Burger, Steve Flanders, Dan Greenbaum, Jane Slater, Janet Weidner, Ron Rappaport (*ex officio*)

**Also Present:** Charles Parker, Tony Orphanos, Rick Shweder, Miles Jaffe, Stan Humphries (LEC), Alex Elvin, David Damroth, Barbara Lee, Wendy Jeffers, Edward Miller, Candy Shweder, Martin Hale, Nancy Talbot, Warren Spector, Rosalie Hornblower, Kali Hornblower, Warren Doty, Celeste Damon, Jay Walsh, Chris Murphy, Emily Bramhall, Bill Cunningham, Carrie Smith, Wendy Weldon, Marg Whiting, Thomas Bena, Ken Iscol, Jessica Roddy, Tim Rich, Sophie Parker, Elizabeth Parker, Gus Wheeler, *others unspecified*

**Minutes** of August 19, 2014 were approved.

**Tim Rich Proposal:** Tim Rich read into the record a proposal to locate the beach parking lot on the current Vytlacil property, which would be acquired and provided to the Town by the FoS LLC, while the SFHA would build a single-lane causeway as well as a pedestrian catwalk to access the beach. This would shift the location of the gate to Squibnocket Farm further west. The Town would develop a limited number of handicap parking spaces and drop-off spaces near the catwalk. Members of the Committee and audience asked numerous questions about the proposal.

**Experts for Assessment and Committee's Timetable:** Jim Malkin noted that the Committee is beginning to move into the evaluation phase of its work, which puts a premium on the identification of independent experts to assist the Committee, especially in light of the expiration of the \$280K grant for this project in June 2015. The timing of the April 2015 Town Meeting for approval of a specific proposal would make it unrealistic to have work completed between April and the end of June 2015. While an earlier special Town Meeting could be called, Jim Malkin also stressed the importance of having maximum Town participation in this important decision.

Discussion ensued as to whether any individual components of the project could be funded out of the grant. Committee members felt that any structural activities should be part of a comprehensive solution, but that a study evaluating of proposed impacts could certainly fall under the parameters of the current grant.

**FoS LLC Presentation: Review of Existing Conditions:** Tony Orphanos introduced today's presentation by the FoS LLC. Maps and aerial photographs show how the existing and previous revetments have shaped the coastline in the area, causing beach erosion in some areas and preventing renourishment. He stressed the importance of restoring a viable bathing beach, which is a valuable asset to the Town, and also expressed the support of the FoS for improved secure access for Squibnocket Farm properties.

Charles Parker presented the FoS LLC slideshow focusing on findings at the site. He noted that today's presentation reviews the current status of the beach and the history of changes in the area. On September 16, the FoS will go into detail on a proposed solution. He stressed the key question of accurately estimating the location and stability of a post-revetment shoreline in the area of the current parking lot and Squibnocket Farm gate. He also illustrated the problem of beach quality, both on-shore and under water, as large sections of the beach are now cobbles and boulders.

The FoS LLC team has completed wetlands surveys in the area, and has reviewed wetland flagging undertaken by the SFHA, with which they generally concur; he stressed the importance of having wetlands officially delineated to enable proper planning, as the wetlands affect what is possible under State and Chilmark regulations.

He summed up three possible approaches for access: a dune ridge as proposed by FoS LLC, a raised causeway as proposed by the SFHA, or a "third solution" in the form of a bridge over Squibnocket Pond. This latter has not been evaluated in detail by anybody, but he stressed that FoS will be amenable to considering other options if preferred solutions are shown to be non-viable.

Stan Humphries, one of a team of experts employed by FoS LLC, reported that they are examining comparable barrier beaches on MV to get a sense of their function and stability. He noted that anything at or below 8' in height is subject to frequent washover and tends to be non-vegetated, while barriers above 12' in height are vegetated and sustaining. Over a considerable period of time, he described a landward migration of dunes. Regulations in Massachusetts are geared to work with—rather than contrary to—these natural processes, and he felt that the Squibnocket area could become a natural reconstruction model for the State.

The Committee is interested in assessing its options for Squibnocket within variable time-frames: while it is clear that we are not seeking a 5-year solution, what can be determined within a 25 year, as opposed to a 50 or 100-year framework? Mr. Humphries noted that, the further into the future we try to conduct impact assessment, the more uncertain the predicted outcomes. He also noted that having a Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) certificate on an alternatives analysis would provide a strong foundation for seeking funding for a project.

**Assignments:** Jim Malkin will contact members of the Beach Committee to join the Squibnocket Committee to share their perspectives on this important resource for the town; Dan Greenbaum, with help from Jane Slater, will contact the experts identified by Jane and Allison to see if they are prepared to assist the Committee with evaluation of proposals in the coming weeks, and will produce an outline to guide them; Allison Burger will review relevant properties, their ownership, purchase or lease status, assessed valuation, and any existing factors regarding these properties; Janet Weidner will summarize any existing and proposed agreements and requirements attaching to properties in the area; Steve Flanders will prepare site visits and identify the properties that would be affected either directly or indirectly.

**SFHA Responses to Committee Questions:** Martin Hale provided responses to the Committee's questions on behalf of the SFHA. These are posted on the Squibnocket Project web page under the "Proposals" heading.

The meeting adjourned at 09:55.