

Town Committee on Squibnocket

Draft Minutes

October 7, 2014

Chilmark Town Hall Selectmen's Meeting Room

8am

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

Also Present: Richard Regen, Susan Regen, Miles Jaffe, Alex Elvin, Paul Hornblower, Jay Walsh, Rosalie Hornblower, Barbara Lee, David Damroth, Chris Murphy, Wendy Weldon, *others unspecified*

Minutes of September 23, 2014 were approved as amended.

Response from State re: Grant Funding: Jim Malkin reported on discussions with the State regarding the grant funding of \$280,000 awarded to the Town. The grant is only available during the current fiscal year, which ends June 30, 2015. Any work funded by the grant must be completed prior to this deadline. Any work done using these funds must also be part of the original proposal. The State also indicated that future funding under a new grant proposal cannot be assured at this time, and the deadline for a new proposal requesting future grant funding is Friday, October 10, 2014. The State indicated that the original proposal was considered to be very good. Jim stated that we are waiting to hear back if there is any chance of extending the currently-awarded funding. It is not clear whether any of the existing funding could be used to hire experts, if these were not part of the original proposal. And since the original proposal was not accepted by the Town, even that would not work. The funding is tied to the project originally proposed, not any alternatives.

Chris Murphy noted that revetment removal was part of the original proposal, and could thus perhaps be seen as a legitimate activity to be funded by the grant? Jim Malkin reminded the meeting that the Committee had in fact considered this notion early on in its work, and had decided it would not be prudent to proceed with revetment removal outside of a comprehensive plan for the area. In addition, Coastal Zone Management had accepted the revetment removal in the context of the comprehensive plan that had been formulated by the BOS. Activities cannot be "prepaid" with this grant money.

Cost-Estimating Experts: Steve Flanders noted that he had been under the impression that there would be funding available from the Town to hire experts to assist the Committee in its work. However, the Selectmen now seem to indicate that there is no funding. Jim Malkin will attend the BOS meeting tonight to clarify this question. Steve Flanders also pointed out the difficulty of generating useful cost estimates when there is no way of knowing what requirements regulatory authorities such as the Army Corps of Engineers will require for a given project. The dune will consist of beach sand, possibly cement sand, and unclear how much of each, respectively. In other words, trying to come up with even rough cost estimates for the "migrating dune" or "elevated causeway" proposals is not possible without significantly more detail than is currently available. Dan Greenbaum reminded the Committee that we only need a few suggestions identifying the individuals who could do this work—the actual cost

estimates are not what we are looking for at this time. It was suggested that the dune proponents provide a cross-section of the dune they propose to construct, identifying how much of what materials and what type of structural elements are involved. Another suggestion was to use existing funding for archeological surveying of the area that is most likely to be required regardless of what kind of proposal is adopted in the end, for example for the area along the road, if diagonal parking spaces along the road are under consideration. Jim Malkin reminded the meeting that we have no Town-approved plan at all at this point, nor even Town-approved *elements* of a plan, and that grant monies can only be spent on the town-approved proposal for which the funding was granted.

The cross-section of the area should also show the depth of the existing materials currently under the parking lot area, since a full revetment removal process would include removal of all of these materials.

Response to Questions: The Committee has requested assistance from the Conservation Commission to assist in answering questions relating to hydrology in the area. Jim will follow up with the Con Com.

Website and Correspondence: it is clear that the website is falling below what is needed. Jim Malkin reported that he is working with the town and with Marina to address how to gain the staff capacity needed to populate the website in a comprehensive manner. Beyond that, however, is the question of what type of communication is to be posted and what is extraneous or counterproductive. Proposals, answers to questions, and statements of position are what the Committee needs. Jim Malkin stated that ad hominem attacks, or debates about internal dynamics of groups interested in the process, are not germane to the work of the Committee and do not assist the Committee in addressing its mandate. The Committee's intent is to have its work based on fact, analysis and thought and not on personalities. He noted that aggressive sentiments, whether expressed in a mannered or ill-mannered fashion, are not something which he felt the Committee should amplify, and he noted that such communications have issued from both sides of the "dune vs. elevated causeway" debate. And he reminded the Committee that its conclusion may be something that is neither dune nor causeway, but that, whatever it turns out to be, it will be based on facts and thorough, conscientious analysis, not personalities.

Summaries based on Site Visits: Jim Malkin reported that Committee members have been on at least one site visit to the area, and some have made multiple trips. He presented a summary of information gleaned from these visits including an analysis of visual impact for properties in the area. Visual impact assessment examines the 31 residences within 2,000 feet of project components and evaluates the extent that their view is currently, or would in future be impacted by various proposed project components.

Dan Grenbaum presented a review of the difference between a one-lane roadway and a two-lane roadway with respect to a number of variables (price, environmental impact, visual impact). The one vs. two lane question shows that, while one lane might serve traffic needs the advantages of view and cost, are minor.. For example, a wider, 2-lane structure may have slightly greater stability than the more slender, one-lane version, which might require additional pilings to compensate, wiping out the cost and any environmental-impact advantage of the one-lane option.

In response to questions regarding other possible options or components of options, Jim Malkin noted that the Committee is initially assessing two proposals to start with, but is not limited to the two proposals.

Experts to Assist the Committee: Jim Malkin said that he will attend the BOS meeting tonight to inform the Selectmen that the Committee requires funds to hire experts to assist in evaluating the merits of various aspects of a possible solution. The Committee unanimously moved to ask Jim Malkin to inform the selectmen that we do need funds for the hiring of experts in order to do the work that we are trying to do for the town.

Discussions among FoS LLC and SFHA: In response to a question from the audience, Jim Malkin clarified the status and nature of the initiative he had mentioned at the prior meeting, where two private citizen residents of Chilmark have undertaken to hold discussions with the opposing sides of the causeway vs. dune debate to explore any possible common ground. This is a private initiative, not connected to or reporting to the Committee or its Chair.

Progress Report to Town Meeting: Jim Malkin will work on a progress report to the upcoming fall Town Meeting on October 20th, which will be available for input by the Committee probably next week. The progress report will summarize the Committee's work so far, including discussion of revetment removal, hearing the dune and elevated causeway proposals, discussion of various possible land purchase proposals, artificial reef suggestions and more.

The Committee's work so far has mainly centered on the dune vs. elevated causeway proposals. Based on recent communications to the Committee, the positions are hardening: the SFHA has indicated that a dune is not acceptable, while the FoS LLC has now indicated that changing the location of a proposed causeway is not acceptable to them. Rather than setting up a "win-lose" situation if no compromise is possible, Jim Malkin asked the Committee to consider whether an alternative access route, *alongside* a dune solution, might not present a constructive option. In an emergency, there would be access for emergency use. Outside of an emergency situation, the migrating dune/barrier beach / roadway would be used. The emergency route could go from Blacksmith Valley over Great Island. Much remains to be explored about this idea, but it just may bridge the gap between the positions. Dan Greenbaum offered to examine the feasibility of this suggestion. Billy Meegan noted that this is the time to get creative: we are not limited to the two LLC options that have been presented to us. A member of the audience noted that this very suggestion had been made by Anne Vytlačil many many long years ago, before the Squibnocket District was even formed: to bridge the narrowest point.

Essentially, nothing has been moved "off the table", including moving the western and/or eastern end of a causeway inland. Ideally, the Committee can find a solution that does not result in a "win/lose" situation. Clarification was sought about the position of the FoS, since it was not clear whether a letter from Wendy Jeffers rejecting a causeway regardless of its location was a formal statement of the position of the FoS LLC, or was a personal opinion. However, Jim Malkin reminded the meeting that Ms. Jeffers has been designated as the conduit for information to and from the FoS LLC.

Chris Murphy felt that the suggestion about an emergency causeway was worth pursuing and would also be looked at with interest by the FoS LLC. He encouraged further creative thinking on the part of the Committee.

The Committee then reviewed communication from Larry Lasser of the SFHA, detailing why a dune option is not acceptable to SFHA. The letter also welcomes the concept of expert-to-expert discussions of the firms engaged by SFHA and FoS LLC to identify areas of agreement and divergence. Jim Malkin

asked the Regens, who are members of FoS LLC, to convey this offer of expert-to-expert talks to the FoS LLC, because it could have a beneficial effect on the Committee's efforts.

A resident of the Squibnocket Farms asked that Jim Malkin refer to the positions of the Association, rather than referring to the "homeowners", since a number of homeowners in the Association do not necessarily agree with all positions put forward by the Association.

The meeting was adjourned at 09:26.