

**Joint Meeting of the Traffic Committee and Board of Selectmen
Wednesday, July 1, 2009
6:30 p.m. Town Hall, 3rd floor meeting room**

Present

Board of Selectmen: David Surface (facilitator of meeting), Gary Fowler, Stephen Smith

Traffic Committee: Michael Caron, Sgt. Kevin DeFeo (representing Police Department), Peter Durkee (representing Highway Department), Sharon Freeman, Debbie Mulligan, Bill Spears

Guests: Chief Albert Beardsley, Georgetown Fire Department and Chief James Mulligan, Georgetown Police Department

Selectman David Surface accepted a motion to open the meeting which was seconded by Selectmen Fowler and Smith. Selectman Surface welcomed the presenters and residents in attendance and stated that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss traffic, pedestrian, and bicycle safety on Bailey Lane in anticipation of the reopening of the Bailey Lane Bridge. He stated that the meeting was not a forum to discuss whether the bridge should be reopened or the cost. As facilitator he would determine whether the question/comment was relevant to the purpose of this joint meeting. He asked that the audience hold questions and comments until after each of the presenters spoke.

Selectman Surface stated that the Traffic Committee was formed in 2006; committee members are appointed by the Board of Selectmen. The Traffic Committee's mission is "to identify, investigate, and propose solutions to safety concerns throughout the town while being an input medium for the citizens." The committee is not a decision making body but provides recommendations to the Board of Selectmen.

Selectman Surface introduced Peter Durkee, Highway Surveyor and member of the Traffic Committee. Peter Durkee stated that the culvert is at the 95% design stage. The Town must obtain a permit from the Army Core of Engineers before work can begin. It may take up to 6 months to obtain the required permit.

Selectmen Surface introduced Chief James Mulligan of the Georgetown Police Department. Chief Mulligan provided a brief history of the traffic issues on Bailey Lane. He stated that prior to the closing of the bridge, the Police Department received citizen complaints about speeding, cut through traffic, and the volume of traffic. He stated that although the speed limit was (then) posted at 25 mph, it was not a legal posting. The legal posted speed limit on Bailey Lane/Taylor Street is 30 mph. The Chief stated that while 30 mph is too fast on that road, it is not illegal.

In 2002, the Police Department conducted a traffic study which found that 13% of motorists traveling on Bailey Lane were not maintaining the speed limit. The study found that the peak travel was 6-7 a.m. but the study did not suggest that it was a major cut through for the evening commute. With the bridge closure the traffic complaints were addressed temporarily and no action was needed.

Chief Mulligan suggested that with the bridge reopening, strategies could be put in place to reduce motorist speed such as:

- Three-way stop at Bailey Lane and Taylor Street
- Road markings
- Traffic calming devices
- Reducing the travel lane
- Rougher grade which slows motorists down
- Motorcycle patrol to enforce speed limit

The Chief stated that it is not feasible to place an officer there 24/7 but he will work with Highway Surveyor Durkee to make changes where changes can be made. He stated that once the bridge is reopened, the Police Department would conduct another traffic study to reassess the traffic situation.

Selectman Surface introduced Chief Albert Beardsley of the Georgetown Fire Department. Chief Beardsley stated that he recently determined the mileage from West Main Street to the culvert vs. Lake Shore Drive to the culvert. He stated he was surprised that it was nearly the same – 4 miles to the culvert from either direction. He stated that fire apparatus traveling on such a narrow road can't do more than 20 mph. He stated he was aware of one suggestion to make Bailey Lane a one-way. He did not recommend this course of action – he and Chief Mulligan concurred that emergency vehicles are required to abide by Massachusetts law – they are not permitted to travel the wrong way on a one-way street. It is also a hazard to motorists and pedestrians who are not expecting vehicles to be traveling in the wrong direction. Strategies Chief Beardsley suggested included improved signage. In terms of the accessibility of fire apparatus, he stated that limiting the street parking would help their access on such a narrow road.

Chief Mulligan commented that he was aware of a suggestion to limit access to Bailey Lane to residents only. He stated that the Interstate Compact Act does not allow restrictions for residents only. Signage must apply to residents and non-residents. Chief Mulligan reiterated the importance of conducting another traffic study after the work is completed and the bridge is reopened.

Selectmen Surface introduced Sharon Freeman of the Traffic Committee who read the following questions/suggestions/comments pertaining to traffic/pedestrian safety on Bailey Lane. She stated that these comments were submitted by residents who could not attend the meeting:

- Maureen Cleary, 72 Bailey Lane: Reopening of the bridge could lead to future changes with the town-owned conservation land at the end of (Upper) Bailey Lane. Concern that changes could result in the road pushing through to (Middle) Bailey Lane.
- Patricia Flynn, 26 Taylor Street: No recognizable difference in traffic before bridge was closed and since bridge has been closed. Emergency vehicle access is critically important. Limiting access from Lower-Middle Bailey Lane is extremely inconvenient for residents.
- Scott Kraus, 22 Bailey Lane: Concern that a culvert replacement will not fix the flooding issue; prior to bridge closing, high volume of commuter traffic cutting through to avoid center of town at excessive speeds; since the closing of the bridge, more children playing on or near the street in morning and evenings, students waiting for bus on narrow road; children are now accustomed to less traffic. If there is an incident with a commuter and a child, town could be libel. Restricting traffic with signage will not work. Speed bumps might help slow motorists down but won't deter motorists from short cut. Suggestion to make Bailey Lane from bridge to Rte 97 a one-way toward Groveland; and possibly one-way in opposite direction during evening commute. Suggests sidewalks in some areas if not cost prohibitive.
- Enrique Reyes, 20 Bailey Lane: Suggestion to make Lower Bailey Lane one-way to Rte 97; limit access by time period (e.g. no access 7am-9am) – enforcement would be key.
- Peggy Fraser, 8 Taylor Street: Biggest problems result from the cut through traffic during the commuting hours; Suggests “No Right Turn between the hours of 6am-8am” on the

corner of Bailey Lane and Rte 97 and a “No Left Turn between hours of 4pm and 6pm”; concern about confining parking to one side of road – feels that random parking slows people down; feels that no action should be taken until the bridge is reopened the town can get a handle on what is needed.

- Richard and Candace Archambault, 4 Bailey Lane: Suggests making the road a one-way and aggressively enforcing speed limits. “Residents only” signs at both ends.

Peter Durkee responded to Maureen Cleary’s question by stating that the land between Middle and Upper Bailey Lane is conservation land – a road cannot go through there.

Selectman Surface opened the meeting up for questions and answers.

Walter Maribito, 5 Bailey Lane requested clarification if the bridge would be repaired and reopened. Peter Durkee clarified that the culvert is being repaired and confirmed that the bridge would be reopened when the culvert is repaired.

Denise McClure, 16 Bailey Lane commented that there is a huge difference between Taylor and Lake Shore Drive. A motorist may not be speeding on Lake Shore Drive but they pick up speed as they go down Bailey Lane. She requested that the study also be conducted on Bailey Lane. She acknowledged that it is difficult to enforce restricted access to a street but it would deter some motorists from cutting through.

Jim McLaughlin, 234 West Main Street stated that there are many dangerous situations such as his children nearly being hit by cars but he has not reported them. He stated that the near misses are often because motorists are coming around the corner from West Main to Bailey Lane too fast. He stated that the West Main/Bailey Lane corner is very dangerous. He supports restricting the hours motorists can take a right turn onto Bailey Lane from West Main Street. He suggested squaring the corners. He also stated that motorists frequently ignore the school bus (passing the bus when children are being picked up/dropped off). He advocated for making changes now to mitigate problems before the bridge is reopened.

Peter Durkee stated that the Highway Department could install additional signage on Bailey Lane.

Denise McClure, 16 Bailey Lane suggested that signage stating “Road Closed” would be more effective. She stated that many motorists don’t see ‘bridge closed’ sign and turn around in her driveway when they get to the bridge.

Chief Mulligan stated that they will conduct the same study as they did in 2002; they will seek assistance from the Merrimack Regional Planning Commission.

John Bell, 115 Lake Shore Drive requested that the Executive Summary of the 2002 Traffic Study be posted on the Town website. Chief Mulligan stated that he will put the 2-page summary on the Police Department website.

Sgt. Kevin DeFeo provided information from the study that was conducted on 10/22/2002:

- A total of 5,809 vehicles were recorded on Lake Shore Drive over a 7-day period
 - 3,194 were traveling East on Lakeshore Drive
 - 2,615 were traveling West on Lakeshore Drive
- Average of motorists were traveling between 16-20 mph. Of the 13% not maintaining the speed limit, the average speed limit was between 36-45 mph

John Bell, 115 Lake Shore Drive inquired if there will be sufficient funds to fix the road (Bailey Lane). Peter Durkee stated that the culvert repair would cost 200k or less including the engineering. A smooth culvert is in the plan.

Mark Unger, 25 Bailey Lane stated that traffic is a town-wide problem. People have a right to cut through; we need to think of the town. Restricting access (e.g. no left turn) will force more people to drive through the square which is already congested.

Lauren MacDonald, 6 Bailey Lane suggested that a traffic engineering company conduct the traffic study rather than the Police Department. Chief Mulligan and Peter Durkee stated that Merrimack Valley Planning Commission would be asked to conduct the independent study.

Mark Favazza, 18 Bailey Lane reiterated the need to repair the road and commented on the drainage issue. Peter Durkee stated that they may need to repair the road before the culvert is replaced. He restated that there is funding available to repair the road.

Lauren MacDonald, 6 Bailey Lane asked if the bridge could be made one-way. Chiefs Mulligan and Beardsley stated that this would not be feasible because the emergency apparatus would need to obey the one-way. Motorists turning around because of the one-way could be particularly hazardous to pedestrians.

Selectman Gary Fowler stated that the digital signs reporting a motorist's speed are a good deterrent. Chief Mulligan agreed but stated that they are expensive.

Robert Tuzzalino, 13 Bailey Lane commented that speed was more of an issue than volume. He stated that the current signage is difficult to see – it is on the wrong side of the road or hidden from view by trees; also signage is posted in areas that are very dark. He advocated that we look into reducing the speed to 25 mph and suggested that cameras be used to identify speeders. He stated his view about the priority issues: fixing the road; proper signage, and enforcement.

Sgt. DeFeo stated that there is a risk to requesting the State to lower a speed limit as the State could determine that the speed should be increased from the posted limit. He cited Elm Street as an example. When the town sought permission from the State to restrict trucks traveling on Elm Street, the State required that the (incorrectly) posted speed limit of 25 mph be changed to 35 mph.

Selectman Stephen Smith acknowledged the risk of seeking a speed reduction but suggested that we should contact other towns that have been successful to learn what they felt attributed to their success.

Teresa Frost, 25 Mohawk Circle suggested that the traffic study include weekend days/times. She stated that several children in the area have grown up with the bridge being closed – they don't have memory of the traffic when it was open. She suggested that an effort be made to educate the middle and high school kids, and also address the Perley School and Penn Brook school children.

Selectman Surface stated that there is a commitment from the Board of Selectmen to work together to address the traffic safety issues on Bailey Lane.

Deborah Bruno, 2 Bailey Lane expressed concern about the bus route. She stated that the middle school students are waiting for the bus at approximately 6:40 am. Motorists coming from Groveland in the winter and/or plows may have difficulty seeing them. Chief Mulligan stated that the Police Department will be meeting soon with the School Safety Committee to review the bus routes. Sharon Freeman stated that Committee member Bill Spears will be attending School Safety Committee meetings as a representative of the Traffic Committee.

Ann Maribito, 5 Bailey Lane suggested larger speed limit signs such as the 25 mph sign that is on East Main Street, near Elm Street. She suggested more signs as they provide visual cues. More "Road Closed" signs in different places.

Jennifer Stanley, 27 Bailey Lane advocated for taking a more proactive approach and making some changes before the bridge is reopened. She suggested a marketing plan before the bridge reopens so motorists, pedestrians are aware of the changes in advance.

Denise McClure, 16 Bailey Lane stated that the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission can make recommendations for changes in addition to conducting the traffic study.

Jim McLaughlin, 234 West Main Street suggested that the signage on the corner of West Main and Bailey Lane be changed.

Selectman Surface recapped the meeting. He commented on the very good input from the residents and the willingness of town officials to make immediate corrections. He stated that the Selectmen and the Traffic Committee will schedule a follow-up meeting in September or October.

Selectman Surface accepted a motion to close the meeting which was seconded by Selectman Smith. With a unanimous vote the meeting concluded at 7:40 pm.

Minutes submitted by Sharon Freeman for approval by the Board of Selectmen and by the Traffic Committee.