

*approved as ammended
December 9th, 2013*

Christine S Ward

Lake Mansfield Improvement Task Force Meeting Minutes:

Monday November 4th 2013 8:30 AM

Location: Small conference room on the 2nd floor, off of the Town Manager's office, Town Hall 334 Main Street, Great Barrington, MA)

PRESENT: C. Ward (chair), J. Dezieck, R. Dlugosz, N. Evans, B. Nelson, D. Phillips, K. Plungis, J. Sokul, and C. Rembold (ex officio), Z. Chornyak (consulting engineer) and J. Tabakin (Town Manager)

NEXT MEETING: 12/9/13, Monday, 8:30 AM, Town Hall

Please note next meeting will occur one month hence, not two.

MINUTES OF 9/30/13: Approved as amended (Knob Hill Road, not Knob Hill)

1. PHRAGMITES CONTROL: Injection of stems and cutting and removal of seedheads was completed this past week by JMP. Contract includes annual inspection and further treatment if required.
2. CONTINUING DISCUSSION OF PROPOSED IMPROVEMENT OPTIONS FOR LAKE MANSFIELD ROAD: Input from all members speaking for themselves and, if already discussed with their commissions, their commission's views.

R. Dlugosz: Proposed first two alternatives are financially impossible and environmentally unsound. Road closing (third alternative) impossible to achieve. Best would be reconfiguring as one way, with walk/bike lane and improved buffer, eliminating proposed guard rail and expensive road subsurface improvements. However, road cannot become one way without prior redoing of parking lot to provide turn-around.

D. Abrams (by email, in absentia): Emphasized that extending width and/or improving road surface likely to increase vehicular usage and average speed. Traffic calming measures, (e.g. speed humps or narrowing of roadway) used in many parks would greatly increase safety to all users.

B. Nelson: Reported from Planning Board that some members were averse to any solution which would render road other than two-way. Reminded the task force that "to do nothing" is an option that should be considered.

K. Plungis: Huge capital improvements are and will be needed by the town; paying to improve this mostly nonresidential road shouldn't usurp funds needed elsewhere. Favored a two way road with a pedestrian lane, but warned about expense of project.

N. Evans: Safety and environmental considerations mandate change (to single vehicular lane, augmented buffer zone, and pedestrian/bike path). Biggest impediments to such change are financial cost and the desire by some to maintain driving route status quo. Use alternative funding (grants), not increased town debt, and in interim work to change negative opinion.

DEC 9 AM 10:00

J. Dezieck: Any solution must improve, not degrade, this environment. The permitting process would insure that protection of the environment would be scrutinized and insured with which ever project is chosen. Mentioned the importance of the wetland areas to the east side of the road.

D. Phillips: Personal preference would be Alternative 3 (closing road to non-emergency vehicles) but this would not be possible to achieve. Therefore one-way, extensively modifying Alternative 2 to make it less costly. Spoke to the possibility of one-way road trial periods as a way to gather information about impact.

C. Ward: Emphasized the history and unique value of the lake and its surroundings, and that Lake Mansfield Road (originally a dirt road, paved just prior to passage of the Wetlands Protection Act) almost surely couldn't be built today. Asked Zach Chornyak, of Tighe Bond Engineering, to look at less ambitious approaches to bank stabilization and drainage improvement. Spoke to the need of considering all uses important to this vital habitat and recreation area, and favors an option which provides for the least disturbance of the shoreline and surrounding environment, a safe pedestrian lane, and a one-way road. Also spoke to the importance of considering the remediation of this area in phases that can be accomplished over time.

J. Sokul: The five-year Capital Improvements Plan for the town is already written; it includes no mention of Lake Mansfield Road. It would cost about \$50,000 just to resurface the road. Any capital improvements from town funds are theoretically not available until fiscal 2019 (although in reality there may be some possibility of getting in 2018 or even 2017 budget).

Further discussion: It was noted that the status quo is actually changing, i.e. the road is degrading and has gotten demonstrably narrower in the past ten years, as is true of the buffer zone. Options that include creating a phasing plan for improvements will be the focus of our next meeting. Zach Chornyak will look at possible other approaches to bank stabilization and drainage improvement to present at the next meeting. This will include the cost of improving the outflow area.

3. Jennifer Tabakin joined us towards the end of our meeting to meet the task force and invite the chair or alternative member to monthly all-committee meetings.

N. Evans and C. Ward