

Official

**HOOKSETT PLANNING BOARD MEETING
HOOKSETT TOWN HALL CHAMBERS (Room 105)**

35 Main Street

Monday, February 29, 2016

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER AT 6:05 P.M.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

INTRODUCE MEMBERS OF THE BOARD

PRESENT: D. Marshall (Chairman), Muamer Durakovic, P. Scrapetti, T. Prasol, F. Kotowski, and D. Winterton (Town Council Rep.)

ALTERNATES: Denise Grafton and Michael DiBitetto

EXCUSED: Tom Walsh (Vice-Chairman)

STAFF: JoAnn Duffy (Town Planner), Carolyn Cronin (Assistant Town Planner), Jim Donison (Town Engineer/Assistant Public Works Director), and Diane Boyce (DPW Director).

PRESENT FROM SOUTHERN NEW HAMPSHIRE UNIVERSITY: Joe Sergi, Monther Mardini, and Patricia Whitney.

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER AT 6:00 P.M.

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WORKSHOP

D. Marshall: We have to make a decision, as a Board, to continue on with the Southern Leg of Parkway that was laid out on the Master Plan and also discuss the Martin's Ferry Road Sidewalk.

Southern Leg of the Parkway

J. Donison: I did some history on the southern and northern legs of parkway. This was talked about 30 years ago. In 2004, the Master Plan recommended a northern leg and a southern leg parkway through Hooksett. In 2005/2006 the Warrant Article #20 was passed for \$50,000. Since that time it has accrued interest so the current balance is \$61,989.49. It is part of a Trust Fund 0055 with the Agent being the TownCouncil.

D. Marshall: Was that in the latest version?

J. Donison: That was in the December 15 version.

D. Marshall: We discussed that at the SNHPC. It will end up on the Futures List because the money is not available. As far as the cross-section, that will be identical to the previous two sections. The intent was always to go from Manchester to Allenstown.

M. DiBietto: Right now that conceptual layout would not interfere with the construction that has been done at SNHU.

J. Donison: I don't know how that alignment impacts the existing construction on Victory Lane.

M. DiBietto: Generally speaking it is on the outer layers of the University and is not bisecting.

J. Donison: The outer limits are along Messer Brook so there might be some environmental, wetlands and impacts issues. In the 2004 Master Plan it stated: "The alternate north-south Parkway is envisioned to relieve traffic on US Route 3 and provide additional capacity as Hooksett grows. This road has been included in Hooksett Master Plans for more than 30 years. In 2002, however, prospects for the road were advanced when the townspeople voted to approve the removal of the prime wetlands designation from Heads Pond. Manchester Sand and Gravel envisions donating a 102-foot wide right of way to the Town. Another comment in the plan was: "In the 1990's SNHPC conducted a preliminary evaluation of a partial U.S Route 3 alternative corridor for a 4-lane controlled access roadway. The objectives were to: (a) Reduce demand on a significant portion of the existing US Route 3; (b) to improve safety and convenience for local traffic; (c) to separate through traffic from local traffic and improve its movement through the community; and (d) to suggest a means of accessing vacant land in the center of Town while minimizing potentially adverse impacts to Route 3." Then it talked about where the southern leg would go: "The Southern Leg of the Parkway would extend northerly from the corner of Route 3 and West Alice Avenue, pass northeast of the SNHU campus, and cross the westerly end of Martins Ferry Road near the North River Road intersection. It would continue northerly through the industrial district on the westerly side of Route 3 and connect with the southernmost leg of Industrial Park Drive." "The Northern Leg of the Parkway would begin on the easterly side of Route 3 opposite the Industrial Park Drive and extend northeasterly, then northerly, through the property of Manchester Sand and Gravel, Inc. and terminate with Route 3 near the Allenstown line." They also had recommendations:

- A. pursue both the widening of US Route 3 and the development of the Parkway. When the Southern Leg of the Parkway is constructed, otherwise necessary improvements to US Route 3 may be postponed due to increased mobility and capacity resulting from the diverted through traffic.
- B. take the initiative to have the Southern Leg of the Parkway designed within the next two years, in order to allow affected landowners to adjust their plans
- C. The Parkway should have a limited number of access points, thus favoring mobility over land access.
- D. Ultimately, the road should have four travel lanes, two in each direction.
- E. Sections of the road can initially be built with only two lanes, as long as the design allows for expansion to four lanes in the future."

The study was estimated at \$150K in 2004. Land Acquisition/Construction dollars have not been established/obtained for the project (Southern Leg is approximately 10,000 linear feet). The cost would be significant. NHDOT Rte 3 improvements have improved travel conditions and \$18M is scheduled in 2024/25 for additional improvements to Route 3.

J. Duffy: About 6 or 7 months ago David Campbell was here representing Manchester Sand and Gravel asking that the Board consider removing the southern leg because it goes through a large parcel of land that they own that is zoned industrial. SNHU is here to give comments on whether they would like to see this remain or not remain. I think they have been accommodating the town for a number of years keeping that area clear. Now that the improvements have been made to Rt. 3 by the state, I think the traffic is flowing better along that roadway.

D. Marshall: It is from Martins Ferry north but not south.

J. Duffy: I agree. It could be 10 years or more until those improvements are made. The other issue is if we put together the money for the feasibility study who will pay for the construction of the roadway. If the Board decides to do away with the feasibility study it has to make a recommendation to the Town Council whether or not to close the Capital Reserve Fund, and then the Town Council would decide. It has to go on the ballot and the money would go back into the general fund.

J. Donison: We invited SNHU to offer their comments on the collector road.

Jim Sergi: The college wants to be a good partner. Right now it doesn't show any impact so for now we will continue to work with the town in terms of what you desire.

D. Marshall: About every two years SNHU comes in with another project. We look at that, see all of the vacant land, and see the potential of that being developed. However, we are seeing nothing proposed that improves the flow of traffic. If you are going to open general traffic to Victory Lane improvements need to be made to Alice. We need to see a better Master Plan.

J. Sergi: There is no change to population. We are just moving population around the campus. We have capped at existing enrollment numbers.

D. Marshall: You are talking about enrollment, but you are adding things that will draw people to the school. You may not be increasing enrollment, but you are increasing traffic as a destination. If you have multiple sports events going on at the same time it would be a disaster.

J. Sergi: We are looking at doing the necessary traffic studies to look at the impact of the athletic facility and the impact to the surrounding area.

D. Marshall: If you are going to hire the same traffic consultant you have to give him a build out that he can do his traffic analysis on.

J. Sergi: We are putting up an additional dormitory and two replacement dorms on the other side of the campus. That is all we have for future development of the campus at this time.

D. Marshall: The phrase "at this time" always bothers a Planning Board because we know you will be back with something else. You need to do a critical build-out analysis because a cap will not hold up in the future.

J. Sergi: We can work on that with TF Moran and come back with something that pleases the Board.

D. Marshall: That would satisfy this Board and at that point we can make a logical decision on what to do. It would not come before the voters until next year. It would be good if you could come back in the early Fall.

M. DiBitetto: We have been concerned about North River Road bisecting the campus and being a safety issue for the campus and providing continuity across the roadway. That road has a significant traffic level. It acts, to some degree, as an alternate route for Route 3. That is an issue that has been recognized but never addressed. In some ways we viewed the parkway as unloading North River Road at some point in the future from being a traffic nightmare for the road, the University, and the town. Those were two factors I think this town has looked at for years and thought it might be a relief valve. We leave that on the list of things to do because we don't want to be backed into a corner that we don't have that alternative available. We are hoping you can assist in coming to a conclusion on what to do. We thought that North River Road might be discontinued as a public thoroughfare at some point in favor of an alternate route that skirted the campus.

J. Sergi: We have no plans for that.

M. DiBitetto: This is part of the reason we have been reluctant to ban this Master Plan item.

D. Winterton: I was on campus Tuesday night. I want to commend you because on that night you had Manchester Police for detail. The boundaries of the two towns you deal with can make it troublesome. My thought process goes to the safety of the student body and the residents of Hooksett. Clearly you have identified there is a safety issue because you hired the details. I would look at some way to continue to think about safety without having to hire detail police.

J. Sergi: We are looking at putting in a light at that intersection and that would be in Manchester. We are always aware of pedestrian safety and it is a high priority for us.

F. Kotowski: It seems to me there could be some benefit to opening the easterly end of the campus. I think it would keep a lot of traffic off of North River Road. You have that gated and it seems to me that could be one of the prime entrances. There may be good reasons why you don't do that.

J. Sergi: We don't want to make that our main entrance. We don't believe it fits in terms of the layout of the campus. We told the Board we would open it for special events. We don't want to make a mistake as far of the traffic flow coming onto the campus when we have a lot of student body walking. We have to be careful on how we introduce traffic onto the campus.

P. Scarpetti: When they do the Master Plan will they tell us what the final outcome will be?

J. Sergi: We are not committing to a full master plan. We have to look at impacts to what we have going up now; the dorm, the sports complex, and the two additional dorms. We do not have anything beyond that plan.

D. Marshall: If that is your idea of a Master Plan it is short sighted. There is too much vacant land to let it stay vacant. You will have to use that land and we need to know what will happen there. Unless you declare the rest of the land conservation land so that we know, in perpetuity, that it will not be developed.

J. Sergi: That is not reasonable.

D. Marshall: I agree, what is why you need to get together with some land use planners that can look into the future.

J. Sergi: We have experienced a rebirth of the campus. We have built replacements. The athletic facility is to expand the existing athletic facility. We are being as transparent to the communities as we are to ourselves. To suggest the University should have a Master Plan that does not, at this time, have plans for additional build-out doesn't make sense. We will look at the traffic impact and come back to the Board.

D. Winterton: Has there been any thought to using Victory Lane, having the students park, and busing them throughout the campus. That would alleviate a lot of traffic from Bicentennial.

J. Sergi: We had some internal discussions around shuttle service around the quad.

F. Kotowski: You are trying to cap student population to your current capacity?

J. Sergi: Building and maintaining is the most expensive piece to running an operation and college costs so it isn't easy to say we are going add students. It is a gamble. In the New England region the traditional high school age student has declined by 17 percent. We want to maintain and invest in the day campus, but it is within what is existing. We will make investments into the traffic, but we don't have anything in the queue beyond what is currently there.

M. DiBietto: We have talked about a traffic analysis and have not defined the areas of critical study. We have not seen a single traffic analysis of existing traffic conditions, failure, or rate of service. Are we asking the University to bring in a definitive plan to have a full blown traffic study on all access points and existing conditions.

D. Marshall: That is up to the Board. You can request whatever you need for traffic.

M. DiBietto: We have had several neighbors come in worried about the level of traffic. West Alice is a major access point as well as Donati, Bicentennial, and North River Road in both directions. It would appear to me that we should know all of the traffic conditions coming and going and at least we would know if there are existing points of failure.

F. Kotowski: There should be benchmarks for the future that would show what is there now and compare it to what is in the future to allow for comparisons. I think there should be traffic counts done.

M. DiBietto: Traffic counts and projections.

F. Kotowski: Seasonal traffic counts also need to be on the docket. If we know what baselines are now, that is the beginning. Then if something happens down the road that will impact that, there is knowledge about what needs to be done. Currently we don't know because we don't have the counts.

J. Sergi: If there is something that you would like or you would like further definition we will fund it

and provide it. We will get traffic counts and want to continue our strong partnership with the town.

D. Marshall: Who are you using?

Monther Mondini: We are using VHB. They are the traffic engineers on the complex. They started the traffic study.

D. Marshall: My suggestion would be that VHB's traffic engineer meet with Jim and JoAnn to determine what we need for the limits of this traffic plan. JoAnn, I believe there is a history from SNHPC of counts that go back 5 to 10 years and that would help with the traffic analysis. I know that VHB is familiar with SNHPC.

M. Mondini: They will be willing to come and meet with JoAnn and Jim. They are experts in the field.

M. DiBitetto: Is looking at West Alice Ave., Donati, Bicentennial, and North River Road in either direction a reasonable scope?

J. Donison: Yes because all of those streets are impacted. We can talk to VHB about that and see if they can be comprehensive in their study.

Martin's Ferry Road Sidewalk

J. Donison: Martins Ferry Road is a roadway improvement project we are looking to implement this summer pending upon the availability of funds and approval from Town Council. The road improvement would be from the intersection of North River Road to Route 3. An option we are looking at is to construct a 5' sidewalk on the north side of Martin's Ferry Road. We asked if SNHU would be willing to construct a small pedestrian bridge across Messer Brook in front of the light house at the corner of North River Road and Martins Ferry, Lot 34. Part of that intersection improvement is they have a landscape plan. Part of the the discussion with SNHU is if they would be willing to design and construct the bridge in coordination with what the town is looking to do with the sidewalk.

D. Marshall: The bridge would be incorporated within the sidewalk plan?

J. Donison: Yes.

D. Marshall: If they agree to build it the town would maintain it?

J. Donison: It would be a wooden bridge on their land. I don't know the answer to that question.

D. Marshall: The sidewalk will go up to Benton?

J. Donison: All the way to McDonalds.

D. Marshall: Even though the lawn may go to the existing road the people may not own it. The boundaries may allow you to do that.

J. Donison: I am researching that. I believe it is 50' and if that is the case there is plenty of room.

D. Marshall: Have you entered discussions with SNHU?

J. Donison: Very preliminary discussions with Monther.

J. Sergi: We have thought about it but we need more information. We are not sure if it would benefit the University to put the sidewalks in.

J. Donison: We are not asking for sidewalks. The question is whether you could have your engineer design a pedestrian bridge to cross the brook.

J. Sergi: We would consider that.

D. Marshall: During the summer there are a lot classes and a lot of pedestrians on that road and during the rest of the year people walk and run in that area.

J. Sergi: If it is reasonable and makes sense we will partner with that.

D. Winterton: Over the last year the Town Council dealt with many issues regarding speed limits and speeding on that stretch of road. Jim is involved with plans to mediate the speeding. That could be in terms of increased enforcement, a crosswalk, or a stop sign. The Safety Committee is dealing with that. It is an engaged issue and part of that dealt with the safety of your student body. We are concerned with that as much as you are.

D. Grafton: Because it may enhance the grounds as well, would you be able to engage the services of students and have the engineer evaluate it?

J. Sergi: That is a great idea.

OTHER BUSINESS

None

ADJOURNMENT

*D. Winterton motioned to adjourn. Seconded by T. Prasol. **Motion carried unanimously.***

The meeting was adjourned at 6:55 pm.

Respectfully submitted by,

**AnnMarie White
Recording Clerk**