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**Minutes of the Commission Meeting
Held on August 11, 2005
In the Old Stone Building
33 New York Avenue, Oak Bluffs, MA**

IN ATTENDANCE

Commissioners: (P = Present; A = Appointed; E = Elected)

P James Athearn (E – Edgartown)	P Ned Orleans (A – Tisbury)
- John Best (E – Tisbury)	P Megan Ottens-Sargent (E – Aquinnah)
P John Breckenridge (A – Oak Bluffs)	P Deborah Pigeon (E – Oak Bluffs)
P Christina Brown (E - Edgartown)	P Jim Powell (A – West Tisbury)
P Carlene Condon (A – Edgartown)	P Doug Sederholm (E – Chilmark)
P Mimi Davisson (E – Oak Bluffs)	P Linda Sibley (E – West Tisbury)
- Martin Crane (A – Governor Appointee)	P Paul Strauss (County Comm. Rep.)
- Chris Murphy (A – Chilmark)	P Andrew Woodruff (E – West Tisbury)
P Katherine Newman (A – Aquinnah)	

Staff: Mark London (Executive Director), Bill Veno (Senior Planner), Paul Foley (DRI Coordinator), Christine Flynn (Affordable Housing & Economic Planner), Bill Wilcox (Water Analyst)

1. OTHER

1.1 Renovations

Mark London updated Commissioners on renovations to the Old Stone Building; the wood will be stained dark green, putty, or white. He said Bruce MacNelly, the architect, did a great job.

1.2 Forum: Gridlock in Paradise

Mark London announced that the last forum, "Gridlock in Paradise", would be held on Wednesday, August 24th at 7:30 p.m. at the Sailing Camp Park.

1.3 Permanent Bridge Public Hearing

Mark London reminded Commissioners of the public hearing on the design of the permanent bridge, which will be held on Thursday, August 25th at 5:30 at the Tisbury Senior Center.

2. PLANNING PRESENTATIONS

Mark London reported that a large number of interns and students worked at the Commission over the summer and helped staff prepare material in anticipation of the comprehensive planning effort. The following is a summary of each of their work.

2.1 Bike Path

Three students from Worcester Polytechnic Institute gathered information about bike paths.

Derek Williams presented their analysis of the Island's bicycle network and identified ways to improve it.

Derek Williams said there have been numerous studies done throughout the years. For their research they:

- rode and walked the trails and examined the island biking network.
- paid attention to bicyclists as they drove.
- surveyed bike shops and bikers.
- did bicycle counts and observations.

He presented their findings:

- In May 2004, the Steamship Authority sold 1500 bike tickets; in August 2004, the SSA sold 4000 bike tickets.
- Martha's Vineyard Hospital reported that 85% of the bike accidents were due to sand on the roads.
- Curb cuts are the most dangerous parts of the bike paths.
- Oak Bluffs and Edgartown have the highest bike traffic throughout the Island. Bikers have to deal with obstacles such as sand and cars and inconsistent paths.

Their recommendations include:

- widening paths.
- educating bicyclists.
- creating center lines on bike paths in 3 ft. segments with 9 ft. breaks as recommended by national standards.
- creating a standard schedule for maintenance on the bike paths through the DPW.
- creating signage; the current signage is outdated and not up to current standards.

He said that they feel education is a key component and should be a major part of bicycling on the island.

Mark London said that the Bicycle and Transportation Committees is working on a master plan.

Jim Athearn said it is tremendously helpful to have the information in one place. The State is responsible for the road; it would be helpful to know which government agency needs to respond to recommendations about the road. Derek's report will indicate who is responsible.

Megan Ottens-Sargent asked if there were alternatives to painted white lines.

Linda Sibley said there are many parts of the bicycle network other than bike paths. She said she has called DPW about sand in roads.

Paul Strauss said the report was very thought provoking. For many years, biking was the chosen method of transportation. He wondered whether the bike paths are trying to carry more than what they were intended for.

Andrew Woodruff thanked Derek Williams and his colleagues for the work they've done.

Mark London said working with WPI was very useful.

2.2 Traffic

Lin Gallant, transportation planning intern from UMass Amherst, said that the objectives of the traffic study were a traffic counting program and a traffic origin-destination survey in Edgartown. During the summer he and his co-interns:

- examined turning movements at the blinker.
- did a road inventory.
- used ATRs and bicycle counters.
- handed out 1500 origin/destination surveys between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. on weekdays in varying weather conditions.
- did turning movement counts.
- examined real time travel delays.
- conducted traffic counts throughout the summer at Five Corners, Stop & Shop in Edgartown, and the blinker. Numbers are slightly down.

Mark London said that when the Oak Bluffs Selectmen chose not to move ahead with the roundabout, they asked the Commission to collect information about traffic at the blinker, and to compare a 4-way stop and a roundabout.

Andrew Woodruff asked whether they were looking at the back-ups at the blinker. **Mark London** said the impact of the 4-way stop is that the back-up has changed from the minor roads to the main road, particularly from Vineyard Haven.

Christina Brown thanked Lin for the work the interns did. **Lin Gallant** said they are continuing their work and are doing an inventory of roads on the Island, including road width, shoulder width, sidewalks, etc., in GIS format.

Mimi Davisson asked whether they are looking at back-ups at the Edgartown Triangle. **Lin Gallant** said they did turning movement counts, and they will look at real time back-up delays; how long and how often. **Mark London** said it might be helpful to speak with police chiefs to understand how long the back-ups are and when they are.

Carlene Condon said that around middle of August, traffic seems to fall off; the sooner the data is collected, the better.

Linda Sibley suggested that if the weather gets bad, they should be out in the business section intersections.

Jim Athearn said his pet peeve road attribute is foliage coming up to the edge of the pavement because it inhibits sight lines and the road shoulder.

The Commission took a short recess.

2.3 Business Database

Brian Goodwin, a Princeton University student studying economics, is working on creating an Island-wide comprehensive database of businesses.

- Their goals were to identify various trends and patterns of businesses on the Island.
- They are 80% complete with Phase I., which shows that four towns have 981 records of possible businesses, which also included home businesses.

- Ultimately, the goal is to create an interactive database; with information about each business, in Access linked to GIS.

Mark London said the information is very useful in getting a snapshot of where the Island is now and allow us to keep track of trends in the future.

Jim Powell asked whether the quality of data varied from town to town. **Brian Goodwin** said that some of the data was pretty expansive and helpful with square footage numbers. **Mark London** said Renee Balter of Oak Bluffs had done some work already.

Doug Sederholm asked how they would identify home businesses that are not identified in assessors' records. **Brian Goodwin** said he received a lot of information from assessors and town clerks. **Chris Flynn** said that some businesses aren't tracked, but they probably are the ones with the least impact.

Paul Strauss said when Oak Bluffs created a Community Development Council, one of their major projects was to address the home business factor. He said that the group has a good record of home businesses; other towns may want to take the same approach.

Megan Ottens-Sargent asked for an example of businesses that aren't considered 'businesses'. **Brian Goodwin** said one of the criteria was having employees, but primarily they used the codes towns use to identify businesses.

Kathy Newman asked about the artisan's community. Most people who are doing art or crafts may not be listed as a business, but the assessor may list art galleries or art shops or home studios. It might be a good idea to go to artisans' fairs to get a sense of the number of artists and artisans.

Chris Flynn said they cross-referenced assessor's cards and home business licenses to make sure there isn't double counting.

Jim Athearn asked if they were attempting to get a handle on the scale of the business by collecting data on gross sales, etc. **Mark London** said they hadn't collected that data in this phase, but they hoped to get a handle on the number of employees, maybe by next year. Understanding the scale of the businesses, location, employees, will help planners see patterns.

Chris Flynn said they were looking at room tax revenue and sales tax. There are some limitations with the information as gathered by the Department of Travel and Tourism, but it is helpful.

2.4 Economics

Jahmil Lacey, who is studying economics at Morehouse College, looked at different aspects of the Island economy.

- His objectives were to update information on population, compile trends, analyze patterns of growth, prepare statistics, and cross-reference local data with state sources.
- His methodology was to use 30 data points that were deemed most essential to general knowledge of the Island.
- They collected historical and point-in-time data using federal, state and local sources
- They conducted a comparative data analysis.

Findings related to population were:

- Dukes County shows population growth at 30% over ten years, about 3% per year.
- West Tisbury and Tisbury have more year-round residents than seasonal.
- 56% of Dukes County is occupied seasonally.

Business trend graphs show:

- Percentage of business establishments per town, with Tisbury showing some decline and Edgartown and West Tisbury showing some growth during the last ten years.
- Percentage breakdown by industry with retail businesses at the highest percent.
- Employment and wage percentages by industry sector with retail, food service, and health services showing the highest percent.

The next step is analysis and narrative to prepare materials that could be used for the comprehensive Island plan

Ned Orleans asked whether they would be able to analyze where people work in relation to where they live. **Mark London** said that information might be available through the origin destination surveys. **Ned Orleans** suggested an origin destination survey be done off season.

Andrew Woodruff questioned whether construction has passed other businesses and wondered whether construction/landscaping have gone under the radar. **Mark London** said data on the underground economy is very hard to get, but that building permits and employment data show direct jobs related to construction have gone down. **Chris Flynn** said the federal economic census might reveal more next year. **Andrew Woodruff** said the average home on the Island is larger and so requires more workers to complete and maintain, so building permits don't tell the whole story.

Linda Sibley agreed that the number of building permits doesn't translate into the number of people who take to build it. She said it would be useful to find a way to measure the underground economy and the very small businesses that are probably an important part of the economy. She said she understood that it poses methodology challenges.

Megan Ottens-Sargent asked about quantifying imported skilled labor. Also of interest is how the cost of skilled labor has changed. The large houses capture high-end skilled labor; regular income people might turn to the underground economy.

2.5 Water

Emma Green Beach, the water study intern, couldn't attend the meeting; **Bill Wilcox** described the two projects they worked on.

Trial Eelgrass Restoration Project in Sengenkontacket Pond:

- Eelgrass is important habitat and keystone element of the ponds.
- Seed source was Trapp's Pond, which has very extensive coverage.
- Seeds ripen and mature, drop out of bags, and seed themselves.
- They had 8 seeds stations with 10,000 seeds in each seeding station. About 10% will germinate and grow with 1000 plants at each seed station, covering a few thousand square feet at each station.

The 2005 monitoring program funded under Clean Water Act:

- They monitored nitrogen at 55 – 60 stations; filtering some samples for chlorophyll and trying to get the total nitrogen picture of the ponds.
- Excess nitrogen produces excess vegetation; dissolved oxygen is an important indicator of system quality.
- They saw the dissolved oxygen measurement decline into late July and August. Inner reaches of the ponds aren't as healthy and they show more algae growth which takes the oxygen out.
- Oyster Pond had algae bloom this summer; compounded by the pond becoming stratified with salt and fresh water. The vertical profile shows more nitrogen later in the summer, after the pond was opened to the ocean.
- The Wampanoag Tribe is doing some analysis, free of charge.
- Some ponds may be showing excess growth because of spring rain, which brings nutrients to the water.

James Athearn said that Mill Pond used to be choked with weeds; swans cleaned it out. **Jim Powell** said that school would be closed so kids could pull weeds.

Bill Wilcox showed the Misin water sampler and the way deep samples could be collected to measure the oxygen level at deeper locations. Then, they run a Winkler analysis to confirm the accuracy of meters.

Megan Ottens-Sargent asked if Bill Wilcox had tried growing eelgrass before. **Bill Wilcox** said they did five experimental seeding stations last year; they are using the same methods as in Chesapeake Bay where they are having good luck.

2.6 Visual Preference Survey

Mark London explained the visual preference survey, a technique used for identifying a community's likes or dislikes.

- Sam Slater, a volunteer intern, advised by Cheryl Doble of SUNY, worked on the Visual Preference Survey.
- The methodology was to have a small number of community members take pictures in response to a series of questions including their likes and dislikes.
- Then, a representative selection of the photos were shown to a larger audience for prioritization. This phase also included a few questions on other topics.
- They were surprised that the results of Phase I were quite consistent, and he was pleased that people gave complete reasons for their choices. There were also consistent responses to what were good or bad models of planning and zoning.

Andrew Woodruff asked how the photographers were chosen. **Mark London** said the Planning Economic Development Committee tried to create a balanced group which included selectmen, residents of various towns, and various age groups. They weren't able to get seasonal residents or high school students as photographers.

2.7 Roadside Character

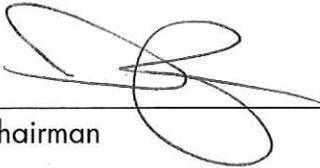
Zak Steele from SUNY, a graduate student in landscape architecture, thanked Kathy Newman for helping him get the job. Cheryl Doble, his faculty advisor, obtained a grant, which paid most of his salary.

- His objectives were to prepare a roadside character inventory of Island roads and to analyze this character including defining various categories of roadside condition. The methodology was to map the inventory and to analyze ways to maintain categories, though regulation and planning.
- Categories such as 'traditional town or village' and 'typically suburban residential' were identified and cross-referenced with the Kevin Lynch study of the Vineyard, carried out decades ago by the Vineyard Open Land Foundation
- The inventory was conducted by taking photos of three views every tenth of a mile, a total of about 4,000 photos. An inventory data sheet was completed for each section.
- Categories such as pristine areas and wooded areas were delineated.
- Mapping is nearly complete along with the initial analysis; they are working on initial identification of roadside priority and identification of threats and vulnerabilities to roadside character.
- Mapping shows protected lands, roadside structures and elements, building orientation and footprints, all of which affect the visual experience.
- He outlined character preservation tools, such as education and land acquisition.

Ned Orleans commented that it seems the Commission is way ahead of where it was two or three months ago. The question of where we are is beginning to be answered. He said that this evening is exciting and it is too bad that media doesn't come to these meetings.

Linda Sibley said she's impressed by the quality of the work and the supervision and thanked the interns.

The meeting adjourned at 10:00 p.m.



Chairman

4-26-07

Date



Clerk-Treasurer

4-26-07

Date