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

Staff:  Mark London (Executive Director), Bill Veno (Senior Planner), Christine Flynn (Affordable Housing & Economic Planner), Bill Wilcox (Water Resources Planner)

1. GOOD COMPANY
Paul Foley gave an update.
• A written outline of offers was submitted.
• Jay Askew submitted a copy of testimony received at the hearing and a document bringing up various traffic issues related to exits from Down Harbor.
• Joe Alosso submitted several documents related to lawsuits and wastewater.

Christina Brown closed the public hearing. LUPC will begin its review on June 12th. The Commission will begin deliberations on June 22nd.

2. BLINKER INTERSECTION STUDY
Mark London explained that Commission staff developed a study for the Oak Bluffs Selectmen analyzing options for the intersection of Barnes Road and the Edgartown - Vineyard Haven Road (the Blinker), an intersection with Island-wide impact.

2.1 Background
In 2001, the Oak Bluffs Board of Selectmen was concerned about the high rate of accidents and congestion at the intersection. They hired MS Transportation to look at and propose various options.

- At the time it was a two-way stop. Options were to add turning lanes, create a four-way stop as a temporary measure, install traffic signals, or build a roundabout.
- Oak Bluffs Selectmen decided to put in a roundabout funded by MassHighway and the Federal Highway Administration. After a spate of accidents, they put in a four-way stop.
- They also put off the construction of the roundabout and asked the Commission to prepare a new study of how the intersection was operating and of the available options.
- A draft of this study has now been completed with the assistance of Greenman-Pedersen, Inc.. A series of public meetings is being held in Oak Bluffs.
- The intersection is at the heart of the Island. Abutters are the Land Bank, Tilton Rentall, Habitat for Humanity and the Youth Tennis Center.

2.2 Study

The study analyzed five options:

- Four-way stop – the existing situation,
- Four-way stop with right turn lane to the airport,
- Traffic lights with the existing geometry,
- Traffic lights with three left-turn lanes and one right-turn lane,
- A one-lane roundabout.

The options were analyzed based on a number of criteria.

Safety

- There are no exactly comparative safety/accident statistics for the five options.
- The difference in the various intersections is the number of contact points; the roundabout has far fewer contact points than any of the right-angled intersection options.
- Roundabouts show a 40% reduction in all crashes, a 76% reduction in injury-producing accidents; and a 90% reduction in fatalities. This is largely because when people run through a right-angled intersection, they tend to be traveling at a high speed whereas with a roundabout the are forced by the geometry to slow down to 15-20 mph

Level of Service and Congestion Delay

- The longest current delay is entering the intersection heading eastbound from Vineyard Haven. The computer model calculated the delay – the time between when a vehicle arrives at the back of the line and goes through the intersection – is 3 minutes. In 10 years, the traffic delay is calculated at 5 minutes.
- Usually the computer overestimates delay but in this case, observers on site saw an eastbound delay of 8 to 10 minutes. At the summer peak, an average of 50 vehicles and a maximum of 68 vehicles were in the queue.
- Goodales pointed out that since there is a long line-up, the exiting trucks can’t see cars coming down from the blinker.
- The addition of a right-turn lane could reduce eastbound delays, but they would still quite long. There are safety issues related to a right-turn lane with a four-way stop, in terms of
lack of clarity of who has the right of way, and limited visibility. Traffic experts are not supportive of an eastbound right-turn lane.

- A traffic signal would reduce delays, as would a traffic signal with turning lanes.
- A roundabout reduces delays the most.
- A concern was raised that improving circulation at blinker would make traffic worse at the ends of the Edgartown – Vineyard Haven Road. However, with the same traffic flow, varying the delay at the Blinker should make no difference to the delays at the end.

Air Quality

- Air quality is worse when cars have to stop and accelerate: the 4-way stop makes the worst contribution. The 2-way stop and traffic signal are in between because only half the vehicles have to stop. A roundabout has the least problems from an air quality standpoint because vehicles don’t usually have to stop.

Landscape and Character

- A traffic light would be the first one on the Island in this century. An Island survey said most people are against it
- A roundabout is not that dissimilar to the vegetated triangles common on the Vineyard. There could be dense native vegetation in the circle.
- The last time the roundabout was proposed, there was a petition against it. One concern was a proposed 150-foot-long concrete median strip blocking entrance to businesses. The present roundabout design does not include that median.
- A roundabout should improve access to abutters including Tilton Rentall, because there wouldn’t be as much traffic at the intersection.

- Mark London and Srinivas Sattoor showed computer simulations of the five options.

2.3 Discussion

In response to questions from Commissioners, Mark London clarified the following.

- The cost of the roundabout option is about $500,000. The cost of the traffic light option with turning lanes is about $400,000.
- Nantucket is now building its first true roundabout, designed by Greenman-Pedersen.
- Public opinion is an issue. In San Diego, people were very negative about the roundabout before construction, but after it was built attitudes changed. Typically, environmental and community groups promote roundabouts for traffic calming.
- Pedestrians and bicycles would use roundabout. Bikes could ride with the traffic or use the bike path. Pedestrians would cross at the crosswalk and would only have to look at cars coming from one direction.
- Roundabouts are not traffic circles or rotaries, which are multi-lane, high-speed and requiring merging with traffic. Roundabouts are small, single lane, and require traffic to slow down.
- Oak Bluffs would pay for the design work; the Commonwealth will pay for the roadwork with federal money.
- The roundabout doesn’t appear to require any eminent domain takings.
- All five options are designed to accommodate any kind of vehicle.
• The Joint Transportation Committee submits an annual Transportation Improvement Program with a list of projects for state funding. The current list includes the resurfacing of and pedestrian improvements to Lake Avenue in Oak Bluffs, the blinker intersection, improvements to Main Street and Williams Street in Tisbury, and to County Road in Oak Bluffs.

• One point of view about the blinker intersection is that it is a problem for only a few hours a day, a few months of the year so there isn’t a reason to change it. Alternatively, it could be considered that the summer is the most important time of the year for the economy; also, the congestion appears to be extending beyond the summer period.

• The Town will have to decide whether they want to pursue a change at the blinker intersection. A brief presentation has been done for the Oak Bluffs selectmen and a comprehensive presentation was done for the public on May 8th. Another public information meeting will be scheduled in July to which the whole Island will be invited.

• Doug Sederholm said the reaction to the first go around was rather negative but people need to be well informed no matter what decision is made. Mark London said that staff is trying to provide information and is not advocating for a particular solution.

• John Breckenridge is concerned that during the summer the roundabout will be filled. People don’t have knowledge of how to go through a roundabout. Do statistics show numbers with such a big summer populations? Jim Powell said the roundabout he’s seen in Florida is comparable as a tourist destination. John Breckenridge said he has difficulty visualizing how it would work.

• Linda Sibley said the presentation information is a little difficult to absorb and suggested that Commissioners watch the presentation on MVTV and read the written report. It’s important to remember that each computer generated options showed the same number of cars.

• Megan Ottens-Sargent suggested defining the distinction between a roundabout and a rotary and clarifying that roundabouts are traffic calming, which reduces accidents.

3. ISLAND PLAN

• Jim Athearn gave a general update.
  - On May 20th, the main facilitator held a session with volunteer facilitators on the Island to exchange information about effective ways to facilitate communication. A few steering committee members and Commissioners attended.
  - On June 24th, the Network of Planning Advisors is being invited to the kickoff public event, a forum at the Sailing Camp, to go over issues of planning on Martha’s Vineyard. The facilitators will lead those sessions. Attendees should register in advance; Commissioners should sign up on www.islandplan.org. Commissioners may also sign up to be part of the Network of Planning Advisors.

• Mark London described the format of the June 24th forum.
  - The Steering Committee will be setting up working groups on specific topics. They will be putting out some factual information on four broad themes; ecology, economy, community, and land with ten topics that may be the subject of working groups.
- The Steering Committee is overseeing big issues and policy. It will ask people to think about what they want the Vineyard to be like 50 years from now and steps are needed to get there.
- There will be a break-out workshop sessions looking at the top 15 or so issues prioritized in the survey. Another plenary session will summarize the results of the 1st half of the meeting. The second session will be on the ten areas. The goal is to get input and prioritize which of the topic areas should have the first workgroups.
- Big topics will be broken down into sub-topics with examples of medium and long-term goals. Interdependence of the topics will be considered and participants will be asked to start thinking about strategies to achieve the goals.

- **Linda Sibley** noted that this is just the kickoff to the planning process. **Mark London** said the key things will be to help people visualize where the Island will be if it keeps on going the way it’s been going; what’s likely to happen to water and land. Then the process is to try to identify strategies. Hopefully at the end the Island will end up with specific proposed strategies.

- **Megan Ottens-Sargent** said one of the goals she would hope for is updating the goals of the Commission. She wondered if in tandem with this general process, the Commission could update its regional plan. She hopes that there’s going to be a strategic focus on the regional plan. **Linda Sibley** said this is what this project is all about, as well as developing strategies for each town.

- **James Athearn** said the first Regional Island Plan had useful policies but fell short on the action end. He hopes this Island Plan will end up several steps ahead. At the end of the three years, we want to have a plan and strategies that capture the future the way we want it to be.

The meeting adjourned at 9:06 p.m.

Chairman

Clerk-Treasurer

3/15/07

Date

3/15/07

Date

Minutes of the Meeting of the Martha's Vineyard Commission, June 1, 2006