

Lagoon Pond Drawbridge Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on May 4, 2005 At the offices of the Martha's Vineyard Commission

Present: Melinda Loberg, Chair; Steve Berlucci, Angie Grant, Harriet Barrow, Jay Wilbur, Derek Cimeno, Mark London, Dan Greenbaum, Fred Lapiana

Observers: Jo-Ann Taylor, Jim Kinsella, Kerry Scott, Duncan Ross, Mimi Davisson, Chris Fried, Srinivas Sattoor, Bill Veno

Minutes

The minutes of the April 20, 2005 meeting were approved as amended.

Design of Permanent Bridge

- The Committee reviewed options regarding bike/pedestrian/moped travel areas, including a Pictometry display of existing routes. The objective is to make tentative recommendations as to the cross-section and the height above the water to communicate to MassHighway for the RFQ process. It is understood that further adjustments could be made in the fall, after the consultants have been hired and as a result of the Committee's planning process.
- With respect to the cross-section, there was a consensus to recommend the following.
 - Sidewalks: 6' sidewalks on both sides.
 - Bike path: an 8' bike path on the Lagoon side. Creating a separate bike path from Vineyard Haven through Oak Bluffs to Edgartown is an important long-term goal. It would be dangerous to cyclists to have to keep crossing Beach Road to get from a separate bike path in some areas to bikes in the shoulders in other areas. Kerry Scott noted that creating a bike path along New York Avenue and Beach Road is a high priority for the OB Board of Selectmen.
 - If the width of the lift portion of the bridge is a critical factor, it might be possible to combine the sidewalk and bike path on the Lagoon side into a 10' shared bike/pedestrian way on the lift portion only; however, this is less desirable from a comfort and safety point of view.
 - There should be physical barriers separating the bike path and sidewalks from the vehicular travel area. This could be similar to the BR2 railings chosen for

the Big and Little Bridge projects provided that safety considerations can be resolved. These barriers should be designed to minimize the visual obstruction of the vista from automobile windows.

- Roadway and Shoulders: Each lane should be 11' wide and the shoulder should be 4' on each side to accommodate mopeds.
 - The bike path and the shoulders in the lift portion of the bridge should have a surface designed for bicycle and moped safety.
- With respect to the height, there was a consensus to recommend the following.
 - The deck of the bridge should be an additional 4' higher above the water, to accommodate most powerboats.
 - The Committee will continue to gather hard data on the heights of powerboats. (Melinda will contact Maciel Marine.)
 - The draw length should be 40', or more as required to shift the navigable channel closer to Vineyard Haven, provided that this does not require piers in the middle of the channel, possibly associated with a double bascule.
 - In MassHighway's bridge 'type' study as well as the Committee's general planning process, we should also look at the possibility that the bridge be raised 15-20' in order to accommodate small sailboats without disrupting traffic. We should continue to examine the impacts of additional height on the length of approaches (e.g. impact to Eastville Beach access), on the visual appearance from the water (it was noted that the bridge's present height is visually desirable because it does not break the skyline when viewed from the ferry and other boats), and on increased boat access to the pond (that might have negative environmental impacts).
 - The lift mechanism should be completely below the deck level, as on the existing bridge, as opposed to having a tower, as on the temporary bridge. It should have as quick a speed for raising and lowering as possible, to minimize the impact on traffic.
 - The Committee will ask the Coast Guard to update the ruling and practice regarding opening times. Originally, the times were chosen in function of the ferry schedule; however, the latter has changed. For example, it might be desirable to eliminate the 8:15 am opening that conflicts with ferry schedules and heavier traffic. Would it be possible, say, to have two openings per day, relatively early in the morning and late in the afternoon?
 - Mark London will prepare a draft letter to MassHighway with the recommendations within the next couple of days, circulate by e-mail to committee members, then e-mail the letter early next week.

- At the next meeting, the Committee should define a planning process for the basic parameters of the permanent bridge design. This should involve the public, including summer people.

Contingency plans in case of closure of existing bridge

- Steve will contact the Sheriff's office to get on the agenda for a joint meeting of All-Island Chiefs of Police and Fire Chiefs. Melinda, Angie, Steve, and Mark will speak to them.
- Melinda will set up a meeting with the emergency management people from Tisbury and Oak Bluffs

Existing Bridge - Availability of information on and recommendation to Boards of Selectmen

- Mark London reported on a phone call with Steve McLaughlin earlier in the morning, in response to the e-mail sent to Steve requesting survey and other data.
 - Steve will send out a letter tomorrow, including the last three full inspection reports. These reports indicate that the bridge is in very bad condition. It is not in danger of collapse but of failure, which would make it inoperable or impassable. The letter will probably say that if the Vineyard wants to drop the temporary bridge project, MassHighway will, or at least will very seriously consider it; however, the Vineyard would have to accept the responsibility. In MassHighway's opinion, the risk is great enough that the draw mechanism and possibility the roadway itself might have to be closed before the permanent bridge can be opened, that it is worth erecting the temporary bridge.
 - He will reconfirm that they consider the entire bridge project as one project from a planning point of view; so the priority for the permanent bridge would not be lowered if the temporary were in place
 - MassHighway has received comments from US Coast Guard, who will have a public comment period, likely in July, and should issue a permit for the temporary bridge in October. The US Army Corps of Engineers permit should be granted before that. This will allow advertising for construction this fall, and construction to begin in January 2006.
 - Bridge inspection reports do not include precise detail regarding settlement/deflection. Steve doesn't think that this would be helpful because, since MassHighway installed bracing two years ago, settlement or changes to deflections would no longer be gradually changing. As pressure builds up, it

would be more likely that failure would be sudden, for example after a major storm.

- Steve McLaughlin reiterated that the bridge has problems all over and cannot be patched.
- There was a consensus to defer the formalization of recommendation to the Boards of Selectmen about seeking an independent engineering evaluation, pending an initial review of the inspection reports expected from MassHighway.
- Rob O'Leary should be asked to send his letter to the new Secretary of Transportation, John Cogliano (former head of MassHighway).

Next meeting will be Tuesday, May 17, 9:00-10:30 A.M.

Minutes prepared by Jo-Ann Taylor and Mark London, MVC