

Lagoon Pond Drawbridge Committee
Minutes of the Meeting held on June 22, 2005
At the Offices of the Martha's Vineyard Commission

Present: Melinda Loberg, Chair; Steve Berlucchi, Fred LaPiana, Tristan Israel, Harriet Barrow, Mark London, Fred Lapiana, Angie Grant, Dan Greenbaum

Observers: Bob Ford, Jo-Ann Taylor, Srinivas Sattoor, Lin Gallant, Ezra Blair, Chris Fried, Louis Larsen, Ralph Packer, Phil Hale.

1. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on June 1, 2005 were adopted as amended.

2. Information Updates

Mark London summarized his conversation with Alton Ellis of District 5 who is in charge of maintenance to the drawbridge. Ellis said the following.

- He considers that MassHighway has exhausted all efforts to repair the existing bridge, but that it is still unstable.
- He would be happy to work with us to maintain the bridge in operating condition.
- MassHighway has survey points on the bridge that they monitor every time they inspect or work on the bridge. He thinks that this is adequate but would consider setting up a program of more regular monitoring if the community thought it would be useful.
- He would be open to meeting representatives from the community to discuss technical details. Any request to meet should be addressed to Skip McCourt.

Tristan Israel reported that MassHighway has made an initial enquiry to the Tisbury town administrator about the possibility of granting an easement during the construction period. Since the Board of Selectmen has concerns about the two-bridge solution and they do not have details about the area required or the type of equipment that would be installed there, they are not inclined to favor the request at this time.

3. Request for Quotes From Consultants

Fred Lapiana distributed a draft of the Scope of Services. The consultant will be asked to review existing data and reports pertaining to the structural condition of the existing bridge, to perform a visual inspection, and to meet MassHighway and Committee representatives. The main thrust of the RFQ is to outline a program of better monitoring of deflection of the existing bridge and prepare a contingency plan to repair the existing bridge should there be signs of settlement.

Mark London said that he and other members of the sub-committee that had worked on the Scope of Services had wanted the RFQ to include a general comment about the continued safe use of the bridge.

The Committee agreed to several wording changes to the draft RFQ:

- section 2.1 should read “. . . access to the hospital via a bridge.”
- section 2.3 should read “The consultant may also devise...”
- section 2.3 - the consultants will be asked to provide their overall opinion of the continued use of the current bridge.
- section 2.3 – the consultants will be asked to comment on the possibility/feasibility of opening and closing the drawbridge using cranes and boats, or by other means, if the mechanism fails.

Steve Berlucchi reiterated that he does not believe that this study is warranted as the inspection reports clearly indicate that the best solution is to erect a temporary bridge as quickly as possible.

4. Emergency Planning

Melinda Loberg reported on a June 14 meeting with the Island Police Chiefs and the County Emergency Manager.

- Committee representatives explained the situation and asked them to work with us on preparing an emergency plan should the drawbridge be closed.
- The Oak Bluffs and Tisbury chiefs said that if Beach Road were to be closed, they would have to put their entire staffs on traffic management. During the summer, there is no really viable alternative to using Beach Road.
- The chiefs were asked to estimate the cost of dealing with a bridge closure, so the possibility of obtaining assistance could be explored.
- Since it is a State road, the State could be asked to help deal with the consequences of its closure, especially if it was long term.

There was a discussion of alternate shelter of boats during a storm, should the drawbridge not be operational.

- Ralph Packer thought that emergency shelter for motorboats could continue in the Lagoon and for sailboats could be provided in Tashmoo.
- Mark London asked about using Katama Bay.
- Phil Hale thought there was no adequate alternative to using the Lagoon since there are draft issues in Tashmoo and he noted that Katama Bay did not offer good protection during Hurricane Bob. He thought a reasonable compromise would be to open the drawbridge by external mechanical means, such as a crane, on a limited basis a few times before and after a storm.
- It was clarified that Maciel Marine has 7 motorboats with towers that enter and leave the Lagoon once per season, as well as 5 sailboats that regularly enter and leave.

5. General Comments

Ralph Packer said that we should move ahead with the temporary bridge and not take any chances by adopting an approach that involves taking a chance that Beach Road might be closed. Public safety (access to the hospital; dealing with an emergency at Packer Fuel) and the economies of Oak Bluffs and Vineyard Haven need to be held paramount.

It was suggested that the current timeline for the bridge replacement detailing the design, permitting, bidding, and construction phases of both the temporary and permanent bridges, should be made public.

We are still awaiting clarification from MassHighway of the status of permitting. We need to maintain regular contact with the person at MassHighway in charge of permitting. Ideally, we would receive a weekly update by e-mail.

The need to maintain continuous contact with MassHighway is critical to the overall success of replacing the existing bridge, and potentially dealing with the effects of a failure.

6. Permanent Bridge

Now that the RFQ is underway, it was agreed that the Committee would concentrate the planning for the permanent bridge. This would involve outlining various options and holding a public meeting to get input.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, July 13, 9 a.m. at the MVC