

# **Lagoon Pond Drawbridge Committee**

## **Minutes of the Meeting held on January 20, 2006**

### **At the Offices of the Martha's Vineyard Commission**

Members Present: Melinda Loberg (Chair), Fred LaPiana, Tristan Israel, Steve Berluca, Mark London, Derek Cimeno, Dave Grunden, Jay Wilbur, Richard Combra Jr.

Special Guests from MassHighway: Luisa Paiewonsky, Commissioner, and Skip McCourt

Observers: Jo-Ann Taylor, Harriet Barrow, Max Hart, Connie Teixeira, Alice Butler, Linda Sibley, Dan Greenbaum, Angie Grant, Ezra Blair, Kerry Scott, Carlene Condon, Kathy Newman, Russell Smith, Jim Newman, Glenn Hearn and Chris Fried

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#### **1. Opening Statements by MassHighway Commissioner Luisa Paiewonsky**

- The Commissioner had been asked to take a second look at the 1-bridge/2-bridges choice:
  - She reviewed the documents and interviewed her staff on the subject, keeping an open mind and looking at it from all sides; engineering, context-sensitive design, aesthetics, bike and pedestrian safety, etc.
  - She is authorized, as Commissioner, to make the decision.
  - She decided to continue with the plan to construct a temporary bridge first; she is very concerned about the condition of the bridge and has no confidence that it could be kept operational over 6-7 years until a permanent bridge is completed.
  - MassHighway will look at the Lichtenstein report for suggestions to keep the bridge open in the short term.
- She offered commitments regarding construction of the temporary bridge:
  - MassHighway will commit to a schedule, will work hand-in-hand with the Drawbridge Committee and will report regularly.
  - She has instructed Steve McLaughlin to take another look at the accommodations for bikes and pedestrians; she doesn't expect full width, but she acknowledged that telling bike riders to walk their bikes for the next several years is unacceptable.
  - She acknowledged that the temporary bridge won't be beautiful, but MassHighway will look at variables such as color to soften the visual impacts.
- Saying it is important to move on, she acknowledged concerns that the permanent bridge may be delayed, and offered her commitments regarding the permanent bridge:
  - This bridge will be a model for the new guidebook on context-sensitive design, with regular reporting and close cooperation with the Drawbridge

Committee. They have a short list for designer selection and will invite Mark London to participate. There will be quarterly meetings to update the group on progress. The Commissioner was reminded that the Drawbridge Committee has already sent in preliminary general recommendations from discussion and public input.

## **2. Discussion**

- There were some expressions of disappointment in the decision, with thanks for her review and visit.
- There were favorable comments on the new design manual (available on-line from MassHighway with suggestion to look at chapter 2).
- There were requests for MassHighway to be sensitive to traffic and staging issues during construction; staging should not impact public use of Eastville Beach or the Lagoon Pond boat launch ramp.
- Responding to questions about commitment of funds for the permanent bridge, Luisa Paiewonsky said that they won't obligate the funds until the design is ready, but that she is confident that the funds will be there.
- Historic lack of confidence in MassHighway was brought up; particularly regarding poor maintenance of the existing bridge, the sandbags on Beach Road, the widened Edgartown-Vineyard Haven Road, and the widened Tashmoo Overlook.
- There were several comments and questions regarding possible removal of the house that is adjacent to the bridge, that would free up staging area as well as room for widening the pedestrian/bike lane on the temporary.
- There was a comment about reducing speed and weight on the existing bridge. Skip McCourt responded that the posted weight limits cannot be changed; that is based on the assessments. It is possible for the Selectmen of Oak Bluffs and Tisbury to request a commercial truck exclusion, which he said MassHighway would look favorably upon.
- The Commissioner was reminded that the local economy depends on keeping the rural character of the Island, so that aesthetics and economics are linked.
- The existing bridge will be dismantled as soon as the temporary is operational.
- The Commissioner will contact the USCG about their permit which has not yet been signed.

## **3. Next meetings**

- Wednesday, February 8, 2006 at 9:00 A.M. regular meeting, with first hour devoted to discussion with local truckers
- Wednesday, February 8, 2006 at 10:30 A.M. Boating Plan Subcommittee

*Minutes prepared by Jo-Ann Taylor*