

Martha's Vineyard Island Roads Committee

Minutes of Meeting 4

Date: June 19, 2014, 5:00 p.m.

Location: MVC Offices, 33 New York Avenue, Oak Bluffs

Present:

Committee Madeline Fisher (Co-Chair, MVC), Linda Sibley (Co-Chair, MVC), Trip Barnes (MVC), John Breckenridge (MVC), Stuart Fuller (Edgartown), Jay Grande (Tisbury), Dan Greenbaum (Chilmark), Fred Hancock (MVC), Richard Knabel (West Tisbury), Joan Malkin (MVC), Kathy Newman (MVC), Brian Smith (MVC), Craig Whitaker (Tisbury)

MVC Staff: Priscilla Leclerc, Mark London, Bill Veno

The meeting was chaired by Madeline Fisher who opened the meeting at 5:05 p.m.

1. Minutes

The minutes of the June 5, 2014 meeting were corrected and adopted.

2. Committee Name

It was agreed to change the name to the Island Roads Committee.

3. Work Program

3.1 Work Groups: It was agreed to set up the following work groups:

- Utilities – including NSTAR and communication companies,
- Vegetation – including maintenance of existing vegetation (by towns, MassDOT, utilities) and planting of new vegetation,
- Signage and Fences – including other roadside elements on public and private property,
- Roadway Design – including current and upcoming road projects, roadway standards, and preparation of a road design manual.

Each of the work groups should have core members, but all committee members would be welcome to participate. Committee members will be asked which work group they want to be on before and at the next meeting.

Craig Whitaker offered to prepare an outline of the steps that could be followed to prepare a manual and get funding.

3.2 Expressions of Interest: The Expressions of Interest from potential consultants must be emailed or postmarked by June 27. Jay suggested setting evaluation criteria in advance. The following people will review the proposals and present comments and/or recommendations to the full committee: Dan, Craig, Stuart, Jay, and Mark. The smaller group can check references and could interview some of the firms, either in person or via Skype. All committee members should have the opportunity to read and comment on the proposals.

3.3 Comments on the Work Program: Individual committee or staff members made the following comments.

- In the 1990s, the Cape and Islands started working with the Commonwealth to recognize different road standards for the region. This effort evolved into a revised road design guide manual for the Commonwealth that provides a process for more design flexibility.
- We should focus on a simple project such as signs, identifying which could be eliminated or replaced and working with MassDOT on feasibility and costs. MassDOT indicated they would consider removing signs that are not needed. Many signs are the responsibility of towns.
- There was a discussion about whether it would be useful to meet MassDOT for a preliminary session or wait until a consultant has been hired.
- The work groups should clarify the legal framework for each issue, such as the Shade Tree Act and signage requirements.
- We will have to address funding, recognizing that towns have limited funds. We should start working on specific issues; successes will make it easier to get funding from the towns or other sources to complete the work. There are many individuals on the Island who could help fund this effort.
- We might be able to get planning boards to agree on a common approach to these issues across the Island.
- There was a discussion as to whether the committee would limit its work to the public right of way or also deal with how roadside elements such as fences and vegetation on private property adjacent to the road affect the view from the road. Some thought we should not deal with the roadside elements, or postpone such consideration. Others thought that this is a high priority. There were more concerns raised by planning boards about the adjacent development than the roads themselves. This could be dealt with through education and/or through zoning.
- We need to clarify which roads are scenic, both those that have an official designation and those that should be considered as having scenic value.
- We should consider the possibility of towns planting large trees under utility wires. The towns could do needed structural pruning so they grow over roads and are structurally stable even when NSTAR trims around the wires. Oaks would be good. Many roads have canopies even where there are utility poles.

4. Inventory

Priscilla outlined the work program of the interns who will be measuring typical road cross-sections in various locations. This will be a representative sample rather than a comprehensive inventory.

5. Meetings with State Representatives

It would be useful to inform state representatives of the effort. Since this is an election year, it is unlikely that much will happen until after the election. We don't need them to intervene at this point, but they might be called on to do so later. They will likely be on-Island in the coming months and we could ask for brief meetings then. It was agreed that the co-chairmen will decide who should meet the representatives and when.

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, July 17 at 5:00 p.m.