

**PLANNING BOARD**  
TOWN OF PETERBOROUGH, New Hampshire

Minutes of September 13, 2010

The Peterborough Planning Board held its regular monthly meeting on Monday, September 13, 2010 at 7:00 p.m. in the Selectmen's Meeting Room of the Town House.

**Members Present:** Chairman Leandra MacDonald, Vice Chairman David Enos, Richard Freitas, Barbara Miller, Rick Monahan, and Ivy Vann.

**Staff Present:** Carol Ogilvie, Director and Laura Norton, Administrative Assistant, Office of Community Development; Rodney Bartlett, DPW Director.

Chair MacDonald called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m. She introduced the members and staff. She noted the first item on the agenda was a presentation by Peter Robinson regarding a concept for a new bridge from Route 202 to Summer Street to provide an alternative access to the Downtown. Chair MacDonald also explained that the meeting was the Planning Board's regularly scheduled meeting and that it was clear that most of the audience was present to hear Mr. Robinson's presentation.

Chair MacDonald then stated "I want to make it clear that this is *not* a public hearing in the normal sense" adding "we will hear the proposal and get as many questions as possible answered." Chair MacDonald went on to note "we have Mr. Bartlett here tonight so I hope you will listen to the presentation and then ask questions. This is our chance to have the technical questions answered."

A very brief discussion about the role of the NH DOT in both the decision making and the financing of the project followed. Mr. Bartlett confirmed that NH DOT will pay for 80% of the temporary bridge. He added "we have had e-mails back and forth and we are awaiting the face-to-face meeting we have asked for." He went on to report "a temporary structure for this project is within their realm" adding "they often come back to us asking what the *town* wants, that is the process we are in now." Mr. Bartlett noted he hoped to have more details by the next Board of Selectman's meeting. Chair MacDonald noted "a public hearing will be held in the future" adding "that hearing will be initiated by the Board of Selectmen."

Before Mr. Robinson began, a member of the audience questioned the other items on the agenda with Chair MacDonald reviewing the discussion of a Planning Board vacancy, an anticipated update from the Wetlands Workgroup on the proposed wetland ordinance, and a report from Board members serving on other committees. Chair MacDonald then asked members of the audience to please identify themselves for the record before they asked their question or made their comment.

Prior to the presentation Chair MacDonald reiterated "we are not deciding anything; we are not making a decision. This is an opportunity to ask questions and give brief comment." She noted

that there had been two options (or plans) discussed in dealing with the traffic considerations during the rebuild of the Main Street bridge. "This is a third option" she said.

Barbara Miller introduced herself as a Selectman in town. She noted another Selectman (Liz Thomas) was also present and that "we are interested in hearing what you have to say. Your comments are important to us."

Mr. Robinson took the floor and thanked the members and audience for coming. "I appreciate the opportunity to give you my idea" he said. Mr. Robinson proceeded with a Power Point presentation entitled "Proposed New Bridge: An Additional Bridge Connecting Concord Street & Summer Street."

The presentation began with several facts of "what we know" followed by a graphic of the general area where the temporary bridge would be located. Mr. Robinson explained his proposal for a new temporary bridge would be constructed north of the present one, connecting Concord and Summer Streets. He referred to the new bridge as the North Crossing Bridge and that the location "would be somewhere between the Jack Daniels Motor Inn and the Strand Building."

At this point Mr. Robinson stopped and noted "in full disclosure, I own Roy's Market and Maggie's and I am fully aware of the traffic problems." He went on to review the **current** proposal for the bridge that would leave one or two lanes open to traffic but would most likely take two years to complete. He noted constructing a temporary bridge to the north prior to the Main Street Bridge replacement would allow residents to become aware of the alternative traffic route, cut the time of construction in half (to one year), and result in a reduction in cost to the town.

Mr. Robinson briefly reviewed potential locations of the North Crossing Bridge as well as areas of concern that included an increase in traffic on Summer Street, a potential loss of tax money by converting a private property to a town-owned property, and the potential widening of Concord Street to accommodate tractor trailer units turning on to the new bridge.

Mr. Robinson then reviewed the advantages of his proposal. He noted better access to the schools and hospital by emergency services, greater access the Downtown during construction of the Main Street Bridge, reduced detouring through other parts of town, and a shorter construction time that would cost less money.

Mr. Robinson told the audience "Peterborough has been described as an English Country Village." He went on to note it is the center for business, banking, books, restaurants, clothing and more. He noted the town's vibrant arts community with performing arts, galleries and museums. Mr. Robinson added "this is pretty imperative, it is an important issue."

In conclusion Mr. Robinson reiterated that a temporary North Crossing Bridge would reduce the interruption that the construction of the Main Street Bridge and Route 202 retaining wall projects will cause. He reiterated the time and cost savings potential, and the fact that the town (especially the Downtown) would not be impacted while the temporary bridge was being constructed.

Chair MacDonald asked Mr. Bartlett about the status of the current proposal that had been recommended by the Board of Selectmen to NH DOT. Mr. Bartlett explained that the recommendation essentially supported the reconstruction of Main Street Bridge in two phases and keeping traffic open at all times.

He concluded by noting “this is all part of the process, the town makes recommendations and DOT has the final say.” He added “the next steps are to meet and identify the engineering phases and where the funds will come from.” It was noted that the original estimate for the rehabilitation of the Main Street Bridge was \$750,000.00 but after the bridge evaluation and the realization that the bridge must be rebuilt, that figure is now in excess of 3 million dollars. Mr. Bartlett reiterated “we have to identify where those dollars are going to come from” as well as the need to sit down face-to-face with NH DOT. He noted “they are the primary funding agency and have a lot of say in how we deal with the project.” Mr. Bartlett noted Mr. Robinson’s proposal had been presented to himself and the Board of Selectmen “and we listened to it.” He added “we asked DOT if it made sense to look at this option and they replied that on the surface, yes, it did make sense.” He mentioned some of the concerns regarding the natural resources of the area, the Library, and the Samuel Smith House. “We need to identify how fragile those aspects are” he said.

Ms. Vann asked if the Board of Selectmen’s recommendation to the DOT included a Bailey Bridge, Mr. Bartlett reviewed the basic two options, Plans A and B per se. He noted Plan A did include a Bailey bridge to be located somewhere in the vicinity of the Sunapee Bank’s parking lot. Plan B did not – it proposed building the new bridge in two phases and keeping one lane open negating the need for a Bailey Bridge. He noted “Plan B is what the Selectmen support” adding “and now in essence we have Plan C.”

Mr. Bartlett reviewed the cost of a new phased bridge versus a Bailey Bridge, noting “every time we prioritize we have to check with the stake holders. We need to identify how we will secure the funds to design a project we can afford.”

August Watters introduced himself and summarized portions of the conversation to make sure he understood it. He noted the three general proposals that had been identified and asked for clarification on the town’s portion of the project expense. He noted the Selectmen’s recommendation (currently) that one lane of traffic be kept open and no temporary Bailey Bridge be constructed. Mr. Bartlett noted the three lanes on the bridge now and how the intention of that recommendation would work adding “that is our goal, we need to get to final designs before we know if that is where we will be.”

Richard Estes introduced himself and complimented Mr. Robinson’s proposal noting “it has a lot less disturbance to the retaining wall than other plans that have been recommended, bear that in mind.”

Ralph Booth introduced himself and asked about the projected traffic flow on Summer Street and Hunt Road if the North Crossing Bridge is *not* built. Referring to the intersection of Summer and Hunt he noted “it is a crowded corner now.” Mr. Bartlett replied “we have done no projections that deal with a north crossing at all.”

Gloria Lodge introduced herself and noted the area of the potential crossing “is all residential properties.” She noted the one site that had been targeted (the former Stockwell house) had been purchased and was now occupied. Mr. Robinson replied that further planning and due diligence would have to be done adding “choosing the connection site is beyond my expertise.” At this point someone from the audience called out “eminent domain?” with Chair MacDonald replying “no.”

Ms. Lodge asked about the temporary bridge “once it is no longer needed.” Mr. Robinson noted some ideas for the bridge were to make it a bike path or foot bridge. Mr. Bartlett added that it may in fact become “something else” but noted that most temporary bridges are just that – temporary. A brief discussion about the potential fate of the temporary bridge followed.

Jenny Dilley introduced herself and stated “since the Board of Selectmen have agreed on the phased reconstruction and a modified oval at the Main Street Bridge site shouldn’t we wait to hear back from DOT about it before going on to other Plans? She added “my second question is what makes the bridge temporary?”

Ray Cote introduced himself and noted he would like to hear from the Police and Fire and Rescue about their feelings on the North Crossing Bridge. He recalled previous reports from the Municipal Facilities study that indicated much of the activity for both “was in the north” adding “we need to think about life quality and safety issues.” Mr. Cote also noted that Summer Street, Hunt Road and Old Street Road were “natural detours” adding “that is a something to think about when considering the validity of the temporary bridge.”

John Teixeira introduced himself and, noting the weight limits, asked “is it safe for the large trucks to go down Summer Street?”

Mary Jean Booth introduced herself and asked if Hunt Road had the ability to accommodate tractor trailer units adding “there will be accidents on that road.”

Ms. Vann asked about a discussion about road connectivity and the Master Plan several years ago. Ms. Ogilvie noted connectivity had been discussed in one of the vision sessions “but it never made it into the final goals of the Master Plan.” Andrew Dunbar introduced himself and noted that as Chairman of the Transportation Subcommittee for the Master Plan he did not recall discussing the connectivity issue.

In reference to tractor trailer units on Summer Street and Hunt Road Mr. Enos noted “they are not closing Concord and Granite Street completely.” Mr. Bartlett agreed, noting “the request has been to keep Route 202 open to traffic, a minimum of one lane at a time.” He also noted it was important to mention “we all find our own detours, we all do it. To say that there would be no additional traffic on other roads is short sighted.”

Jean Gilbertson introduced herself and spoke briefly about long-term easements and wetland impacts involved with putting up a temporary bridge. Chair MacDonald replied “it is fair to say that has not been looked at.”

Pat Woodward introduced herself and expressed her concern about the potential backup of traffic, right into the Downtown, including right in front of the Fire Station.

Geoff Taylor introduced himself and noted “there will be increased traffic either way.” He also pointed out the character of Hunt Road, describing it as “picturesque, but with already 3 to 5 times the amount of traffic it should have.” Mr. Taylor pointed out a dangerous 90 degree right turn and that there were a lot of children living on the road. Mr. Taylor concluded by noting “the current speed limit of 30 miles per hour should be reduced” and “that when you sanitize the road of its potential dangers, you lose a bit of its character.”

Laura Mahoney introduced herself as a Summer Street resident and also a business owner in the downtown. She noted the potential cut in construction time as favorable but still questioned the viability of the Downtown during the project.

Nancy Harrowitz introduced herself and spoke about increased traffic on Union and Grove Streets. She noted she was in favor of emergency vehicles having better access with the potential of a North Crossing Bridge, but noted a need for “an iron clad” assurance that the bridge would be temporary.

Steve Mahoney introduced himself and noted “people take the path of least resistance, if there is **no** way into Downtown there will be **no** Downtown.”

Fran Chapman introduced himself and asked “why do we have to do this?” Mr. Bartlett replied “because eventually the bridge will collapse.” Mr. Chapman looked at Mr. Bartlett and asked “when?” which brought a chuckle from the audience. Mr. Chapman went on to ask “how do we know if the bridge is a temporary or a permanent one?” Mr. Bartlett explained the structural difference generally found between the two, as well as a brief review of the life span of a temporary bridge; in addition, in order for it to become permanent, NH DOT would have to be reimbursed for its contribution, and the complete review process for a permanent bridge would have to be undergone.

Joanne Carr introduced herself and noted both traffic issue and speed limit concerns. She suggested traffic counts for Middle Hancock Road above High Street to below Hunt Road as well as a consideration to vehicle weight, size, and speed. She concluded her thoughts by noting “let the through traffic go through and the local traffic be local, I don’t want Hunt Road changed.”

Maude Salinger introduced herself and asked about a traffic study for the town. She noted “there are many other intersections in town with dangerous issues: adding “and often we find it difficult to fix one problem without creating another somewhere else, or have quick fixes without addressing the issue.” Ms. Salinger went on to note “Route 202 and 136 is a failed intersection among others, and the Main Street Bridge is not the only bridge that is going to fail.” Ms. Salinger noted her concern over increased traffic on Summer Street and Hunt Road as well as assuring that a temporary bridge is “really temporary.” She added “you see the bridge through the windshield and think as drivers, not residents of a historical area.” She concluded by noting “I plead with the town of Peterborough and those who should be planning to get a traffic study done for the town.”

Geoff Taylor noted it would be great to have the construction time cut in half but added “It may not be the best solution.” He noted Mr. Robinson’s proposal “projects a disruption cut in half, that is the overriding advantage, but all of us will suffer from this in some form.”

Ray Cote spoke briefly about unintended consequences and noted “the traffic will be there no matter what we do.”

B.J. Woodward introduced himself and noted other ways (streets) to get to the downtown. He asked if there was any proof that the North Crossing Bridge would cut the construction time in half. “Are there any studies to back it up?” he asked.

Lisa Teixeira introduced herself and asked about the environmental impacts of placing a bridge closer to the town water supply (referring to the Tarbell and North Wells). Mr. Bartlett acknowledged her concern and agreed the impact would be greater to the river noting “temporary, but greater.”

John Kaufhold introduced himself and noted his support for the proposal. He suggested the bridge be made permanent and offered to sell a piece of property he owned on Concord Street. “This could be Plan D” he said.

A gentleman from Reynolds Drive voiced his support for the proposal but asked about the reduction in the construction time. “What is the time frame?” he asked adding “and what is the estimate of the cost factors involved? What are the savings in time and money?”

David Simpson introduced himself and shared a few concerns he and the Library Trustees had following a presentation by the Heritage Commission about the bridge project “right at our front door.” He noted concerns that included the many months of construction as well as the proximity and increased volume of the traffic. He noted the location of the Library “from our end of Main Street” and how the building “looks into the heart of Peterborough.” He again noted the location of the Library and the many historic and unique buildings that make up the streetscape of Main Street.

Mr. Simpson went on to touch on several other concerns as well as several suggestions for improvement to the Library’s “unsightly west bank of the river, the parking lot and the walking areas.” *A copy of Mr. Simpson’s statement is attached to these minutes.*

The meeting concluded with Mr. Robinson again thanking the members and audience for their attention. Mr. Bartlett reiterated that “at this time we just do not have enough information to make a decision.” A Summer Street gentleman interjected “Peter got a half hour to present his idea and we don’t get a chance to respond?” Mr. Bartlett reiterated the meeting on September 20<sup>th</sup> (the Planning Board Workshop night) would be dedicated to the topic as well as a repeat presentation to the EDA and the Greater Downtown TIF Advisory Board on Tuesday morning (September 21<sup>st</sup>.) at 8:00 a.m. He added “and Tuesday night (the 21<sup>st</sup>) the Board of Selectmen will get an update on the Main Street Bridge *and* Retaining Wall projects from the Town’s engineering consultants.”

**Planning Board Vacancy:**

William Groff was introduced as being a candidate to fill an alternate seat on the Planning Board. Mr. Groff noted he was a newly retired judge and would like the opportunity to get involved with the town. He gave a brief biography noting "I have reviewed some of the site plan and zoning literature but am not familiar with everything" he added "this will be a learning process." A brief discussion about appointing a judge and conflict of interest followed. Chair MacDonald noted "we are not a judicial body in any sense. We try to operate in a collegial fashion and come up with the best consensus as a board." Mr. Groff noted an advisory opinion found a senior judge *can* sit on a Planning Board with no conflict of interest. .

It was noted and reiterated that the alternate position "is a full member in every sense but the voting." It was also noted that the alternate should make every effort to make it to every meeting and that they would have the opportunity to vote if appointed to sit in for a regular member who is absent or who abstains. Mr. Enos noted "this evening is a good indication of what you can expect, we give people an opportunity to present their case or proposal, we hear from those in favor, from those against, and in most instances we deliberate and vote on it." Chair MacDonald interjected "I have been here the longest and I am still learning." Another member noted "the majority of people that come have never been in before. We are here to help and reassure them." Ms. Miller added "we are perceived as a place to come in with a concept and use the Planning Board as a consultant before they file their application." Chair MacDonald agreed noting "it is a good non-binding way to use the talent here and make a good decision."

A motion was made/seconded (Vann/Monahon) to accept Mr. Groff as an alternate to the Planning Board with all in favor.

**Wetland Proposal Update:**

There is no update at this time. The Group is scheduled to meet again on September 20<sup>th</sup>.

**Report Out of Board Members Serving on Other Committees:**

No update

**Minutes:**

A motion was made/seconded (Enos/Monahon) to approve the Minutes as written.

**Other Business:**

Chair MacDonald noted the CIP process was quickly approaching noting she was only representative for the group "which is technically an arm of the Planning Board." A brief discussion about the CIP followed with Mr. Freitas volunteering to fill the open Planning Board seat on that Committee. Chair MacDonald appointed Mr. Freitas to the committee. It was noted CIP begins October 5<sup>th</sup>.

The meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Laura Norton  
Administrative Assistant

MEMO

TO: PLANNING COMMISSION

FROM: David Simpson

RE: A Bridge Just Right

CC: Board of Selectman, Rodney Bartlett and Pam Brenner

DATE: Sept.13, 2010

I would like to share with you a conversation that I and other library trustees had recently following a presentation by the Heritage Committee about the bridge at our front door.

We are of course very concerned about the affect of 24-30 months of construction on our patrons and staff and on the integrity of the Abbott structure (The original building) and the closeness of the new traffic patterns and the volume of same as a result of four lanes plus walk ways and a rotary to the library building and its operations

The trustees are developing their vision for the future of the library and at the same time taking a look at our end of Main Street. We will be taking a look at the placement of the structures in relation to the view of the town afforded by our location -- looking up into the heart of PB -- our building as it fits into the whole building scape of Main Street and the access to and other uses of the river frontage that is part of our plot.

Main Street from the Granite Block to the library contains three major non profits the library, Maraposa Museum and the UU Church. Each of these organizations are in historic and unique buildings all of which are registered land marks.

My fellow library trustees David Weir (also a trustee of the Maraposa ) pointed out that the rebuilding of the Main Street bridge should be used as an opportunity to examine the street/building scape of our end of Main Street and the inclusion of an extension of the river walk through town and on up Summer Street

Part of the conversation focused on the following

- Breaching the dam and the changes in the water levels and exposed banks
- the current bridge sidewalk creates an unsafe and scary path putting the pedestrian between a car and a hard rock wall
- the banks of the river are over grown and littered with debris (which no doubt affect the quality of the water on of your concerns)
- the town turns its back on the pleasant site of the two rivers that provided life to this town site since the Indians and through the various mills located here.
- the library totally ignores the "nature side" of our plot --we put the cars facing the best view in the house!
- the town could consider expansion of the current river walk by allowing for a path along side the river and one that passes under the Main Street bridge so folks don't have to fight four lanes of traffic getting across Main.
- the unsightly west bank of the river needs to be relandscaped. Steps to the river walk could be placed there and the embankment would be improved and not be a trash collector as it is now

- the current parking lot for the bank and the offices on the west bank could be redesigned so it is not bumper to side walk
- the Veterans Way could be expanded to take in this area and engraved paving stones made available to the public to off set costs
- the bank building parking area could be blended into a walking area
- the aesthetic value of the public building anchors of this part of town the library, Mariposa and the Unitarian Church. this should be recognized in the planning advantage

I personally feel that the placement of an alternate river crossing north of Main Street (two RR crossings) would have many advantages to the town and the residents of Summer Street. Probably improving property values (the layout of the streets as its entry point into Main. being just one example) An alternate river crossing is also important for the movement of emergency vehicles and school buses. Narrow and curvey Hunt Road will not do as the major alternate cross over

And even so Summer Street can expect a major increase in traffic during construction without receiving any potential benefits. I would encourage the residents to see the leverage they have in this situation. Just think of what might be done along the river front. As it stands now Summer Street is, has been and will be a major a north/south road into town why not make it better.