

TOWN OF CHESTER
BOARD OF SELECTMEN

August 29, 2019

Minutes

PRESENT: Arne Jonynas; Heather Chase; Lee Gustafson; Leigh Dakin; Ben Whalen; David Pisha

VISITORS: Shawn Cunningham, Charlie Wright, William Lindsay, Kirby Putnam, Brian Mosher, Amy Mosher, Richard Jewett

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Arne Jonynas.

1. CITIZENS COMMENTS:

There were no citizen's comments.

2. SCOPING REPORT FOR THOMPSON BRIDGE:

Laura Stone, Jonathan Griffin, Carolyn Cota and Wendy Pelletier were present from VTrans to discuss the Scoping Report for the Thompson Bridge project. A copy of the Power point is attached to these minutes.

Arne Jonynas questioned the right of way process that would be required. Laura Stone explained that the right of way team assesses the property and begins negotiations with the landowners and the town. Should an agreement not be reached, the town would begin a condemnation process. VTrans will reach out to the property owners with personal conversations to explain how the right of way will impact the property owner. VTrans will develop the right of way plans. Should condemnation be required, the town would hire the lawyer but the costs are reimbursable. Should the condemnation process be required, only the initial offer would be paid to the landowner.

Lee Gustafson questioned if the town chooses an alternate other than #5, but the cost is more money than the recommended alternative, will the State reimburse for that. Laura Stone noted that there is only one bridge programmed for this project. If the town wants to construct multiple bridges, it would be required to have the bridge added to the State's project list. They also stated that a bridge serving only one house will not make the top priority for funding.

Arne Jonynas questioned this project and if it has always been considered as a 3 bridge elimination. The State noted that the elimination of 3 bridges was developed during the scoping phase which started 2 years ago.

Lee Gustafson questioned the archeologic survey. Jonathan Griffin explained this process. Once the Selectboard has given its decision, the Phase 1 archeologic survey would begin. Ben Whalen confirmed that the new section of roadway and bridge would be built to withstand flooding and flood prevention.

Melody Reed questioned what the State is doing now to consider climate change when it is designing bridges and structures. Jonathan Griffin explained that bridges are designed to bank full width so that abutments are not in the river. Bridges are now built on piles or ledge which eliminates scour.

Amy Mosher expressed her concerns about the reduction to 1 bridge, primarily the right of way that would be required across her land. She stated that she and her husband are not intending to allow right of way across their property and are not willing to negotiate a right of way. She questioned if the Board would be willing to discuss any condemnation suits that would be required.

Arne Jonynas stated that Palmer Bridge has been downgraded. He questioned what happens if the bridge ends up being condemned, can the town cross lands for emergency. Laura Stone stated that if the bridge is deemed "emergent" then there is a process that will allow access. However, a declaration would need to be issued by the Governor.

Lisa Kaiman stated that the Palmer Bridge issues are significantly limiting access to her property. Julie Hance stated that there will be numbers presented for the Palmer Bridge repair at the September 4 Selectboard meeting.

Amy Mosher stated that she has been doing research on condemnation. She stated that the town is required to prove that there are no other alternatives. She also stated that there is a letter in the Scoping Study referencing the Jewett Farm. Arne Jonynas stated that if it comes to that process, the town would need to seek legal counsel. Amy Mosher stated that one bridge is not an option for the town. She is hoping that the town would invest the money wisely and not pay for a temporary bridge but put the money into a more permanent fix.

3. SCOPING REPORT FOR BRIDGE 14 AND 16:

Laura Stone, Jonathan Griffin, Carolyn Cota and Wendy Pelletier were present from VTrans to discuss the Scoping Report for the Bridge 14 and Bridge 16 projects on Vermont Route 103 North. A copy of the Power point is attached to these minutes.

Following the presentation, it was discussed that the smaller bridge will be constructed in one construction season. The larger bridge will be a 2-3 year construction season.

There will be temporary bridges at both locations. Only one bridge will require a right of way for the location of the temporary bridge. VTrans will be meeting with the property owners. Cheryl Joy Lipton questioned the process for handling the long-eared bat habitat that has been identified.

4. ADJOURN:

A motion was made by Leigh Dakin to adjourn. Seconded by Ben Whalen. The meeting adjourned at 8:04 p.m.

Julie Hance
Secretary to the Selectboard

Ben Whalen
Clerk of the Selectboard