

TOWN OF WAITSFIELD, VERMONT
Selectboard Meeting Minutes of
September 20, 2010

I. **Call to Order.** The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. at the Waitsfield Town Office. Present were Selectboard members Kate Williams (Chair), Charlie Hosford (Vice-Chair), Paul Hartshorn, Bill Parker (7:40), and Sal Spinosa; Town Administrator Valerie Capels, Fire Chief Delbert Palmer; Evan Detrick (Dubois & King), Lisa Loomis (Valley Reporter), Tony Italiano (Channel 44/45); Peter Boynton, Darryl Forrest, Jane Goodwin, Dori Ingalls, Ted Joslin, Troy Kingsbury, Drew Simmons, Ellen Strauss, Vickie Trihy, Stan Ward, and Myndy Woodruff.

II. **Waitsfield Historic Covered Bridge.**

1. **Overview.** Ms. Capels and Selectboard members gave an overview of the project and purpose of the meeting. They explained the abutments of the Covered Bridge need repair and that the cantilevered sidewalk is affecting the stability of the bridge. Waitsfield received an 80/20 grant of \$270,000 from the Vermont Transportation Enhancements Program to address those two issues and Dubois & King has been hired to develop the design and engineering plans. This is an opportunity to hear about the overall scope of the project, the expected schedule, and other details. The Covered Bridge is an important icon for the community. Issues affecting the entire bridge are open for discussion.

2. **Scope and timeline of VTrans Enhancement Project.** Mr. Detrick explained there are three stages to this process: project definition, design, and construction. This is the definition stage where detailed information is gathered about the bridge, the various issues, and range of approaches to address them. Some issues that have been suggested include:

- Strengthen the sidewalk, or relocating it within the bridge;
- Repair and/or replace other structural members;
- Repair or replace the existing wooden deck planks and bolts;
- Repair the cracking and spalling abutments;
- Repair the scour hole on the face of the west abutment;
- Replace or keep the existing cedar shingle roof to alleviate the snow load on the roof;
- Repaint or strip the painted bridge facades;
- Explore ways to alleviate damage done to the interior by the vehicular collisions;
- Traffic management and/or detour during construction; and
- Locating a construction staging area.

These and other issues will be addressed with the development of the initial study to define alternatives. A report with recommendations and cost estimates will be produced and there will be another opportunity for public comment.

3. **Discussion and Other issues affecting the Covered Bridge.** The following is a summary of comments and discussion.

Ms. Goodwin has lived at the east side of the bridge since 1985 and frequently sees trucks go through the bridge despite the signs prohibiting them.

Mr. Woodruff has lived at the east side of the bridge since 1974. He provided a sketch illustrating the following concerns and suggestions:

- The curb on the northwest approach is very tall and should be lowered, camouflaged, or removed;
- Wasted space on the river side of this wall could be made available for additional abutment support;
- If a metal roof is proposed, it should have a dull, non-glare finish;
- The approach signs should be straightened;
- A trash receptacle should be provided at the bridge;
- The existing path to the swim hole beneath the bridge should be improved;
- The wooden approach railings are rotting; consider replacing them with stone walls; and
- The existing cedar shingle roof is frequently damaged by the swimmers that jump off of it.

Ms. Ingalls prefers the bridge stay as it is with the exterior sidewalk. She suggested using “fake slate” for the roof. It is light-weight and sheds snow easily. She suggested doing something to clean up the sign clutter at each end of the bridge. She noted that the Mad Marathon is scheduled for July 10, 2011, which begins at the bridge.

Fire Chief Palmer does not believe a metal roof would be appropriate for the historic qualities of the bridge.

Mr. Forrest cautioned about coordinating with the municipal water project, which will be under construction next year.

Ms. Trihy expressed concern about the dim lighting in the bridge that makes it difficult to see on-coming vehicles. She asked whether openings could be created in the upstream siding to let more light into the interior of the bridge.

The Town raised the concern about erosion control and recommended coordinating with the streambank stabilization project currently being planned on the west side of the river extending from the bridge abutment.

Ms. Strauss cautioned about abutment repairs creating any constrictions to the water flow, as happened in Warren when the bridge abutments were repaired there. She asked that no additional material be in the river channel. She and Mr. Woodruff suggested that efforts be made to make the channel wider.

Mr. Kingsbury urged sensitivity in scheduling the closure of the bridge with the Valley’s wedding season, which runs from mid-May to mid-October. Mr. Boynton added that venues have other events in addition to weddings, such as exhibits and performances. With enough

advanced notice, he and others can provide updated directions and post the information on their Web sites. It was asked if the bridge could be closed during the week for the repairs and re-opened for the weekends.

Mr. Ward asked about the feasibility of a counterbalancing weight on the southern (upriver) side.

Fire Chief Palmer noted that the detour associated with closure of the bridge would add 8 minutes response time of the fire fighters getting to the fire station to respond to a call. If a fire truck does have to pass through it, there is only 3 inches clearance.

Mr. Joslin recommended the sidewalk be retained. It allows pedestrians to linger and observe the interior design of the bridge and how it was built.

Ms. Capels provided the following summary of e-mails or other messages received from people who were not able to attend (some added into the notes subsequent to the meeting):

- Sheila Getzinger: Uses the covered bridge almost every day and it seems there are always pedestrians using the walkway year-round. Thinks it would be dangerous to put the pedestrians within the bridge. Wonders if it would be possible to reconstruct the walkway so not cantilevered or to somehow separate it from the bridge. Maintaining the bridge and walkway would be best solution.
- Michael Sharkey: Thinks it is important to save the walkway. Not removing the huge amount of ugly wires on the west side of the bridge will leave us with an ugly bridge that will not fall down.
- Bill Curley: The bridge should be kept as built. A historic bridge he knew in the town where he grew up was burnt by an arsonist but rebuilt to the original design. Perhaps historic preservation funds could be used.
- AnnMarie Harmon: We should do everything we can to keep the sidewalk from a historic preservation perspective and importance to the community.
- Clayton-Paul Cormier: would like a copy of the meeting summary.
- Friends of the Mad River: Consult with the River Management Division at the Agency of Natural Resources.
- Lynne Kingsbury: Would hate to see pedestrians moved to within the bridge. It would detract from the bridge design. Could the sidewalk be built independently but remain abutting the bridge. Without the sidewalk, all the photos and paintings would be wrong.
- Dan Holtz: Lives near the bridge and sees a lot of people using it. Enjoys the partitioned sidewalk area and believes smooth traffic flow and pedestrian safety would be negatively affected if sidewalk removed. Would not want to be walking through in the dark where the vehicles are.
- Chris Pierson: Would like the pedestrian sidewalk to remain. Perhaps a carrying beam or some other anchor system could be incorporated into the abutments. Should revisit the alternative route to Bridge Street. The one he recommends would extend the East

Warren Rd and Joslin Hill junction into a 4 way intersection, with the new road going across from East Warren Rd. and into the field between the Joslin and Pestle properties, crossing the river on the backside of the field, and coming out across the corn field behind the school where it can then join Route 100. It would provide a more reliable means of egress during high flood waters for access to the southeast side of town, provide a viable truck and emergency vehicle route, and would relieve traffic from Bridge Street and open the possibility of making Bridge Street one-way. A cap on traffic volume should be considered to help extend the life of the bridge.

- Jon Jamieson: Is concerned about the kids swimming at the bridge, damage they are doing to the bridge, and the potential liability to the town if someone gets hurt, particularly jumping from the roof. The trash they leave is annoying, too.
- Louise Moulton: Enjoys regular walks and stands on the sidewalk at the bridge watching the water. Does not want the sidewalk removed or placed inside the bridge.

Mr. Detrick provided a form for people to fill out and send back if they have any other thoughts or concerns.

4. **Next steps.** Mr. Detrick explained that the plan is to complete the project definition and design phases so construction could occur toward the end of 2011. The report with recommendations will be presented at another public meeting. All of the recommendations will need to meet with the approval of state permitting agencies and the division for Historic Preservation. The length of time the bridge may need to be closed will depend on the work that is proposed to be done; it could be two to three weeks. Some recommendations may be deferred to later phases depending on the cost or other factors.

III. Other Business.

1. **Bills payable & Treasurer's warrants** were paid.
2. **Other.** Selectwoman Williams presented a letter of support she drafted for the Mad River Path Association's grant application to the Mad River Valley Recreation District. There was consensus of the Selectboard to send the letter.

- IV. **Adjourn.** The meeting was adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Valerie Capels
Town Administrator