



**Hampton Beach Area Commission  
MINUTES  
Selectmen's Meeting Room  
February 22, 2006**

Commission Members Present

Chairman Fred Rice, Town of Hampton  
Vice Chairman Doug DePorter, Dept. of Transportation  
Brian Warburton, Regional Mgr., Dept. of Parks & Recreation  
Jim Workman, Town of Hampton  
John Kane, Hampton Beach Village District  
Skip Windemiller, Hampton Beach Village District  
Tom Higgins, Hampton Chamber of Commerce  
Warren Bambury, Rockingham Reg. Planning Commission  
Jamie Steffen, Hampton Town Planner

Absent

Allison McLean, DRED  
Sandrine Thibault, Office of Energy & Planning

Chairman Rice called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. and led the attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Rice said that this is the first live televised meeting of the Hampton Beach Area Commission. The purpose of this meeting is to conduct a public forum to gather information from the residents, business and property owners and other parties with an interest in the future of Hampton Beach. The Hampton Beach Area Commission was formed by the New Hampshire legislature two and one-half years ago. Its purpose is to advise state and town governments on strategies for implementing the Hampton Beach Master Plan.

Chairman Rice then introduced the members of the Commission.

Chairman Rice reminded attendees and viewers that the Commission does not have anything to do with the infrastructure project at the beach, and has no power to enforce regulations or require that actions be taken. The Commission only looks at or develops long range plans that would make Hampton Beach a better place, and makes recommendations to other state and local agencies for implementation or enforcement.

## Old Business

Chairman Rice explained that the Commission has been organized into four committees, each of which concentrates on a different area of the Master Plan:

### Community Development

Skip Windemiller, Chairman  
Fred Rice  
Tom Higgins  
Warren Bambury

### Beachscape

John Kane, Chairman  
Jim Workman  
Tom Higgins  
Warren Bambury  
Doug DePorter

### Zoning and (Re)Development

Jim Workman, Chairman  
Fred Rice  
Skip Windemiller  
Sandrine Thibault

### Transportation and Parking

Doug DePorter, Chairman  
Fred Rice  
Jim Workman  
John Kane  
Brian Warburton/Allison McLean  
Sandrine Thibault

Chairman Rice asked each committee chair to give the public an overview of its area of interest, and to bring everyone up to date on its activities.

Skip Windemiller spoke for the Community Development Committee. He said that the committee had recently reviewed the plans for a proposed condo project and approved it with some recommendations for changes. He said they were trying to get away from the boxy buildings so common at the beach. Two architects have volunteered their time to serve on this committee – Rich Corell and Shannon Alther. A booklet of design guidelines is being put together which will show examples of preferred architectural criteria. They will be given to individuals who request building permits for the beach area, so that they will have a better idea of the overall theme of the intended future appearance of that area.

Jim Workman spoke for the Zoning and (Re)Development Committee. Zoning changes are currently on the ballot that would limit the first floor of buildings along Ocean Blvd. to be retail space, and which would require on-site parking for condo conversions. Future issues to be dealt with will include zoning regulations which pertain to parking. The committee will also develop a comprehensive plan for Floor Area Ratios (FAR) for the entire beach area.

Doug DePorter spoke for the Transportation and Parking Committee. He said most of the committee's focus is currently on the Hampton River Bridge. At this point, this bridge is #13 on the state list. He has been in touch with the bridge design people and they are running some engineering economics as to costs of staffing.

Chairman Rice said that a lot of people are now working on efforts to replace the bridge rather than rehab it. As stated at the last HBAC meeting, if the existing bridge is only rehabbed, it will still be a 2-lane bridge and will probably not move up on the state's priority list. A replacement bridge is needed rather than a rehab for the economic health of Hampton Beach. Chairman Rice said he had spoken to State Senator Ted Gatsis who observed that this was important from a Homeland Security viewpoint. Chairman Rice said he had also spoken to Senators Gregg and Sununu, Representative Bradley, Councilor Griffin and other key people about the bridge. He advised them that a rehab would be detrimental to the long-term economy of the region, so it is therefore necessary to put in a temporary high span which will serve long enough to allow time for a replacement bridge to be designed and built.

Mr. Windemiller said he had spoken to Senator Sununu's office and there are ways it might be possible to get the bridge moved up on the priority list, and perhaps doing just the repairs necessary until it is possible to get the entire new bridge.

Chairman Rice asked for ideas from the public. The Commission will make sure they use everything at its disposal to justify the need for a replacement for the Hampton River Bridge.

Chairman Rice said the Visioning Study prepared by FST shows the need for major "anchors" at each end of the beach. There is interest in establishing at the Hampton Beach State Park a Sea, Air & Space Museum. This would be a large attraction that would draw more people in the fall, winter and spring. Mr. Bambury has taken the lead on this.

Mr. Bambury reported that the group involved in bringing this to Hampton and running it is a non-profit group. The Commission would be involved in helping them to raise some funds to develop their master plan and architectural design. This group is made up of people from UNH. A fundraiser is being planned and the details will be out soon.

John Kane spoke for the Beachscape Committee. He said they are developing a promotional program with the state to hang flags on utility poles along the main streets, and there have been meetings with Unitil, who owns the poles. The goal is to try to make Hampton Beach more of a resort area and give it a little bit of color. The Committee is looking at signage. Mr. Kane showed a picture showing an example of a new design for welcome signs at the entrances to the beach. Updating signage on Winnacunnet Road is also being addressed. There is a plan to expand the number of rubbish containers on the beach.

Mr. Warburton said that the establishment of a Hampton Beach Area Commission is great because it lets people know about relationships with the state, etc. The Fire Chief, Police Chief, Directors of Public Works and Recreation also come into play. Mr. Warburton said Hampton Beach State Park is under-utilized. Mr. Warburton said he thought the museum was a terrific idea.

Chairman Rice said that George Bald had been confirmed as the new Commissioner for the NH Department of Resources and Economic Development (DRED). Chairman Rice said he anticipated that Mr. Bald would do an outstanding job on behalf of Hampton Beach.

## New Business

Chairman Rice said that Ms. Thibault had suggested that the Commission come up with some design guidelines for architectural review. Mr. Windemiller is in process of doing that. Ms. Thibault had also stressed the need to establish a strategic plan for this Commission to operate under. Chairman Rice said that the Strategic Plan would be built around the key projects now under consideration, to include upgrading the state park, replacing the Hampton River Bridge, increasing parking at Hampton Beach, defining floor area ratios, creating design standards and new attractions at Hampton Beach. The Strategic Plan will also include input from the public received at tonight's meeting.

Chairman Rice said that televising the Commission's meetings is great, but the logistics of showing every meeting are difficult. He suggested that there be monthly meetings and a televised meeting every 3 or 4 months where summaries on the status of projects could be given. The Commission agreed to Chairman Rice's suggestion. Untelevised meetings will be held at the Police Training Room at the beach.

## Approval of Minutes – January 26, 2006

Moved by Mr. Warburton, seconded by Mr. Kane, to approve the Minutes of January 26, 2006, as amended.

Vote: 9 yes, 0 no. Motion passed unanimously.

## PUBLIC FORUM

Chairman Rice thanked the public for attending tonight's meeting. He said their input is important. He asked for positive input only. He asked that each speaker talk only about the main points of their idea and then work with the appropriate committee to work out the details.

### Tracy Emerick, 207 North Shore Road

Mr. Emerick recommended that the specific plan for Floor Area Ratios be started as soon as possible so that there will be enough time to get full concurrence on them for next year's warrant articles.

### Charlie Preston, 47 Glade Path

Mr. Preston said that he thought the replacement of the bridge was a great idea. He said a lot of these projects are a long way down the road and will cost millions and maybe we should start with some small improvements that would be noticed right away. He suggested dressing up the existing maintenance building at the state park, and using it for restrooms and a visitor's center. He also suggested that perhaps it could be an interim location for the Fire Department substation.

Chairman Rice said a welcome station like the rest area on I-95 would be great. He agreed that there are a lot of immediate projects which could be accomplished, however, it is important to also keep the long-range projects on the plate or they will be pushed farther out into the future.

Mr. Bambury said that Route 1A from Portsmouth to Seabrook has been designated as a Scenic Byway. There is a possibility of some funding. He will look into this.

Regarding the bridge, Mr. Preston asked if it would be possible to build on the existing abutments. Mr. DePorter said it is possible, but unlikely, since the spans needed for a higher, arch-type bridge would probably not match up with the existing flat roadway bridge spans.

Rick Griffin, 529 Ocean Boulevard

Mr. Griffin said he was certainly in favor of the recommendations on the bridge. He said there is a lot of privatizing of bridges in Florida, but there are steep tolls. Mr. Griffin suggested that a welcome center should be somewhere near Route 101.

Andy Guthrie, 10 Boston Ave.

Mr. Guthrie suggested a children's museum instead of the Sea, Air & Space museum. He suggested the possibility of a couple of piers at the state park. This would fund the restaurants and you could charge for fishing. Mr. Guthrie said he would not be for a privatized bridge and asked that the Commission please think of restaurant owners when developing these plans.

Chairman Rice said that this Commission does not have the power to restrict development to only specific uses in specific areas. The Commission is advisory only, can only recommend future uses to the Planning and Zoning Boards..

Jamie Sullivan, Hampton Police Chief

Chief Sullivan spoke about the bridge as a public safety issue. Any closing of the bridge, even for construction of a new one, would be of great concern. It would help if there were not a drawbridge during peak traffic times.

John Hangen, Director of Public Works

Mr. Hangen said he agreed with Mr. Preston that some immediate projects should be addressed. He said partnerships with the state, DRED, etc. were very important. He thinks a parking garage is very important. If it is put off, it will only get more expensive because of inflation. Mr. Hangen said he thought the Town was very wise to make the investment in the infrastructure project which is now under construction.

Charlie Rage, 121 Ocean Blvd.

Mr. Page said he agreed that signs should be upgraded and that something has to be done about a parking garage. The garage should be able to pay for itself.

Skip Webb, 11 Windmill Lane

Mr. Webb said he is very pleased that this Commission is following the original master plan. He said that while we are waiting for a solution for a new bridge, the problem of the drawbridge still exists. He stated that boat traffic for a drawbridge can be regulated if you get permission from the Coast Guard.

Mr. DePorter said that the openings of the drawbridge have been looked at. The number of openings has increased considerably.

Chairman Rice said that we know how many boats pass through. Now it is necessary to count how many cars go over the bridge and at what times. He asked Mr. DePorter if DOT could do a traffic survey on the bridge. Mr. DePorter will look into it.

Hank Lipe, Hampton Fire Chief & Emergency Management Director

Chief Lipe complimented the Commission on looking at the strategic master plan. He mentioned how Eisenhower had a vision in 1919 for an interstate highway system, but that final Congressional approval for funding did not become available until 1938, and construction did not start until the 1940's. This shows that beneficial projects might take a long time, but you have to have the vision. Chief Lipe said you have to start somewhere and now is the time to start. Regarding the bridge, he said that it is very important that we can move people in case of emergency. The bridge is a major bottleneck. Chief Lipe said that whatever recommendations are made, it is essential to emphasize the moving of people for safety's sake.

Mr. Kane said that the funding for the bridge would be 80% federal and 20% state. Chairman Rice said that Homeland Security funding might even change that picture. Mr. Warburton said that it is important to continue to go after large federal grants.

Ed McDonald, Epping Avenue

Mr. McDonald said that there is a possibility that once there is a 4-lane bridge, it could cause other bottlenecks. He asked if it would be possible to have a connector from I-95. Mr. McDonald also mentioned the possibility of a ferry system operating out of Hampton river to other area ports.

Justin Eisfeller, Director, Engineering, Unitel

Mr. Eisfeller said that Unitel has long range plans for their electric system and it would be good if they can be combined with the Town's plans. Unitel is looking for joint planning. One short term concern Unitel had was setbacks and clearances. Mr. Eisfeller said that all zoning recommendations should be run by Unitel. It is necessary to plan ahead.

Elizabeth Webb, 11 Windmill Lane

Ms. Webb told about a bridge fell in the water without warning in an area where she once lived. She said it doesn't matter how a bridge is labeled, it can still be dangerous. Regarding flags, she said it was important that the hooks are checked frequently so that the flags can't fall down on top of a car. Ms. Webb suggested some type of people mover to move people from the proposed garage.

Geannina Guzman-Scanlon, 4 J Street

Ms. Scanlon thanked Chairman Rice for having this meeting televised. Ms. Scanlon said a survey will be coming out soon. One question on the survey was how do we do the beautification of Hampton Beach. Ms. Scanlon said it is critical that once the public gains access to members of the Commission that everything continues in the spirit of dialogue. Ms. Scanlon suggested having something like Prescott Park in Portsmouth. She also suggested having smaller scattered gathering centers rather than just one at the Shell. Ms. Scanlon said she thought a children's museum was a wonderful idea.

Regarding parking, Ms. Scanlon said her major effort is to keep the parking that residents now have. Chairman Rice said that the Visioning Statement prepared by FST two years ago had recommended opening up the streets by widening sidewalks and limiting parking to one side only. The Commission voted unanimously to support that recommendation, and it has not changed its position since. From this point on, the only realistic solution to the limited parking at the beach is to create new, additional parking capacity that is not available now.

Ms. Scanlon said that if there is going to be an architectural review, there will be a need for public hearings and a vote by the public. Chairman Rice replied that if everything the

Commission does were subjected to public hearings and votes, nothing would get done. The Community Development committee only makes recommendations and suggestions to the developers, who may adopt them or not. It is the job of the ZBA to grant variances, and the Planning Board to approve final designs..

Joe Ebert, Winnacunnet Road

Mr. Ebert commended the Commission for its work. He said both the bridge replacement and a parking garage are key items.

Skip Webb, 11 Windmill Lane

Regarding flags, Mr. Webb cautioned that upkeep is very important. Flags do wear out. A flag that is crisp and clean is a great advertisement. One that is worn out has the opposite effect.

Rick Griffin, 529 Ocean Blvd.

Mr. Griffin said there needs to be a solid message that Hampton Beach is not just a seasonal beach.

Mike Robinson, 4 Dover Avenue

Mr. Robinson expressed the concern that if summer residents can't park in front of their rental, they won't come to the beach.

Chairman Rice said that it is not physically possible to maintain multiple parking spaces in front of every multi-unit property at the beach. The fact that some residents and visitors have been parking on town land along the streets for many years does not now obligate the town to continue to provide new parking for them in the same place now that street upgrades and sidewalks are being installed on Town land.

Summary Statements

Chairman Rice said he felt that a good step had been taken at this meeting towards everyone's goals. He asked for any closing comments from Commission members.

Mr. Kane said that if anyone has any ideas on beautifying the beach to please call him at 926-1800.

Mr. Steffan said that the Planning Board is the main driver on zoning regulations. He will do his best to help. The Rockingham Planning Commission will be working with the Town on the Master Plan.

Mr. Bambury said that he would stress that a 5-year study should be done on the garage.

Chairman Rice invited the public to bring suggestions and input to the various members of this Commission

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Commission, Mr. Higgins moved, seconded by Mr. Windemiller, that the meeting be adjourned. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:00 p.m.