



Hampton Beach Area Commission

Meeting Minutes, January 25, 2007 Hampton Police Station Conference Room

In Attendance:

Fred Rice, Chairman – Town of Hampton
Doug DePorter – Vice Chairman, NH Dept. of Transportation
Brian Warburton – Secretary/Treasurer, DRED (Seacoast Parks/Rec)
Todd Loiseau – Town of Hampton
Tom McGuirk – Hampton Beach Village District
Chuck Rage – Hampton Chamber of Commerce
Fran McMahan – Rockingham Planning Commission
Jamie Steffen – Town Planner, Town of Hampton (Administrative)
Judy Santarelli – Seacoast Parks and Recreation (Administrative)

Excused:

John Kane – Hampton Beach Village District
Carol Barleon – Office of Energy and Planning

Chairman Rice called the meeting to order at 7:35 pm. The minutes of the October 26th, 2006 meeting of the Commission were reviewed and accepted as written. Chairman Rice pointed out that the Record of the Public Hearing held on November 29th, 2006, does not need to be officially accepted, although the notes are available for review.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS:

Community Development: Tom McGuirk wants to contact architect Shannon Alther, to determine what materials he currently has on disc for the guide book. Julie McDonald, an architect from Portsmouth, has approached the Community Development subcommittee to get some conceptual ideas for the Guido Murphy's project, which will add 2 floors containing hotel suites. She had found no distinct style at Hampton Beach, so Mr. McGuirk sent information to her showing beach hotels from the period 1920-1950. Chairman Rice suggested she also be referred to the book Hampton and Hampton Beach, by Bill Teschek.

Ms. McDonald has asked to meet with the subcommittee on Wednesday, February 28th at around 3 pm. Chairman Rice reminded members that last year they voted to allow the Community Development subcommittee to respond to design inquiries such as this, and to vote on them when needed. This speeds up the process and avoids tying up the whole board.

Beachscape: Due to John Kane's absence there was no formal report given.

Zoning and Redevelopment: Jamie Steffen summarized the results of the Planning Board's 2nd public hearing. There was quite a bit of negative input on the proposed changes, but the Planning Board did decide to move forward on a new definition of "hotel" to make it more precise. They agreed to amend parking requirements for condominiums and to define "stacked parking". They also proposed to change the requirement for recreational space per unit in the beach area.

Chairman Rice expressed surprise that some people who had worked with HBAC to move forward on proposed changes, voted against it. Fran McMahon also expressed his disappointment, but rationalized that perhaps it's better that if people were not understanding the intent of the proposed measures, that they be dropped from consideration now so that further effort can be put into formulating a cohesive package that can be better understood by the public. Information must go out early and often.

Chairman Rice had been advised by some Planning Board members that there was still too much information for the voters to absorb and comprehend all at once. There was consensus in the group that the town's zoning ordinances have never been adequate, and that, historically, everything has been done by exception. The variances need to make sense in order to be adopted.

Chairman Rice suggested that one way to simplify the zoning would be to remove the "donut" area and to make all three residential areas just "Beach Residential." He suggested that the term "Resort" seems to have given the wrong impression as to its intent. He emphasized that it is just as important to protect the Residential areas as it is to promote the Commercial areas.

Tom McGuirk asked if the various articles could be kept separate rather than being grouped together, so that they could be considered and voted on separately.

Chairman Rice restated the goal of eliminating the term "seasonal". He acknowledged that this may still be too much for the voters if it is all presented at once. He pointed out that new proposals in Hampton seem to require 2-3 years for vetting.

Tom McGuirk emphasized that Hampton Beach zoning cannot be the same as for the rest of the Town of Hampton. Chuck Rage pointed out that there are people who want to make the beach a Disneyland North, and there are those who don't want anything to change.

Chairman Rice encouraged the group that after the elections, they should see what can be done in April to work with with the other boards. Fran McMahon advised that there should be a package formulated by Labor Day.

Chairman Rice, when speaking of the "shadow" discussions at the hearings, said that he wants something concrete that will assist them in making rational decisions regarding the "shadow" question. He mused something like a hot air balloon might provide evidence. Tom McGuirk stated that a simple article stating that no building will be allowed that casts a shadow on the beach might address this issue.

Transportation and Parking:

Doug DePorter reported that the Ocean Blvd. resurfacing contract is out to bid. They propose a completion date of May 17th that will allow time to get the striping done before Memorial Day. Mr. DePorter and Brian Warburton said they had both worked on getting the gas utility line work underway. Mr. DePorter shared pictures of the microsurfacing process and equipment that will be used.

The need for better crosswalks was discussed. Chairman Rice suggested that DOT meet with someone from the town, to see about using the same blue color as was used uptown. Mr. Warburton said that Mr. Hangen, Director of Public Works, has stated that he doesn't have anything to do with the crosswalks. Mr. DePorter stated that DOT could only paint them a standard white, and could not do blue. Mr. Warburton pointed out that road striping has not been done clearly in the past, and should be improved.

Chuck Rage suggested that there be signs in the middle of the road denoting a crosswalk. Doug DePorter responded that those signs are not owned by his department. Chuck Rage continued that there need to be signs on the sidewalk as well and that the biggest problem occurs in front of the Casino creating stop and go traffic. He advised considering some type of barrier so that people could only cross at the crosswalks where there is a light. Chairman Rice mentioned that perhaps this could be done in conjunction with the rebuilding of the Seashell Stage.

Fran McMahon asked Doug DePorter what the limits of the project are. Mr. DePorter responded from Hampton Bridge to Dumas Avenue. Chuck Rage stated that the sidewalks need work since they flood easily when the roadway crowning is done improperly.

Hampton River Bridge:

Chairman Rice reported that the Board of Selectmen chose the option for minimal repair to the bridge in 2008 with the rest of the rehab work to be done in 2016 (if a new bridge is not ready for construction by then.) State Representative Nancy Stiles set up a recent meeting with DOT to discuss options for preservation of the old bridge as well as the safety concerns involved. Rocky Gauron had spoken to the group on behalf of users of the harbor. He suggested retaining the old drawbridge section, but moving it to the shore where it could be used for fishing. Representative Stiles had since met with David Scott, and another meeting will be scheduled with DOT. Chairman Rice and members of the Commission praised Representative Stiles' commitment and dedication to issues that impact her constituency and she was recognized as bringing discussion together from all sides.

Chairman Rice reminded the group that Representative Ben Moore of Seabrook, who had addressed the Commission last fall and said that he would introduce a bill relating to financing construction of the bridge. The bill went in last Tuesday. Representative Stiles also has a bill and said that the Public Works Committee will be discussing the two bills together. Chairman Rice said that the town of Seabrook now supports the new bridge. He also said that the latest plan is to ask for funding to do the design work, possibly using the money that is set aside for the second phase of the rehab work. Representative Stiles will contact Chairman Rice to speak

before the state subcommittee when her bill comes up. Tom McGuirk expressed that he would be interested in being part of this as well.

Division of Parks:

Brian Warburton reported that Governor Lynch is on record as supporting Senate Bill 5. He said the bill. A major Hollywood film is in the works which will use the Park Office in Rye as well as Hampton Beach for shooting. It is expected that crews will arrive in March and work through June. This year will be 100th anniversary of the Hampton Beach Village Precinct.

Chuck Rage said that part of the plan for marking this is event is to dedicate each night of fireworks (each Wednesday) to an individual who has meant something to the growth of Hampton Beach.

Mr. Warburton said that the guardrails from the Marine Memorial to Boar's Head will be finished and that the seawall at North Beach is going into the Governor's Budget and will cost between 8-10 million dollars to finish. Mr. Warburton added that there is currently a warrant article being proposed to take away the 20% of revenue from town parking that historically has gone toward infrastructure improvements in the Hampton Beach Precinct. He urges everyone to speak out against this article.

Chairman Rice added that he does not understand why anyone would want to suggest an article that would take away this amount of money that has done so much to improve the beach area. He said that if the article passes, the money would only go directly to the town's General Fund, and could not ever be spent on the Beach. The amount is not large enough to lower taxes in any significant way but it would take away money that could be used on infrastructure projects.

Todd Loiseau offered that when Charlie Preston went around with the petition, he thinks people may not have been informed and some signed without realizing the impact the article would have.

Tom McGuirk asked who was involved in making the film that had been described. Mr. Warburton responded that the project included both local crew and a California staff who had approached Van McLeod, Commissioner of Cultural Affairs, in Concord. Mr. McLeod's office is involved in arranging filming sites.

Mr. Warburton added that the Penguin Plunge will take place on Sunday, February 4th and that anyone interested in attending, should contact him. He then thanked Tom McGuirk for his work on issues that impact State Parks. He said that the State Park System is in trouble right now financially. He explained that NH State Parks have been self-funded and that we need people to ask their State Representatives to tell DRED that Hampton is a 12 month operation/ not a seasonal operation and that we need help and we need money.

Earth, Sea, and Space Center:

Chairman Rice reported that almost all of the supporting letters from agencies that the Commission members represent were in hand. He added that this expression of support is necessary in order to build the case for a green light for a study of using the state park site.

Chairman Rice will put together the thoughts of the Commission in the form of a cover letter to accompany the others. It is hoped that with this groundwork, if the results of the study are positive, no one would then object to the project getting off and running.

Chairman Rice said that he will try to meet with Senator Martha Fuller Clarke and Executive Counselor Bev Hollingsworth. He explained that Crystal Kent needs to know that there is support for the concept of an Earth, Sea, and Space Museum at a specific location before she can complete the process of obtaining funding for the study. Chairman Rice said that he will be attending a conference in Monterey, California shortly, and he plans to visit the Monterey Aquarium to gain insights into that project.

Chairman Rice submitted a summary of the activities of the Hampton Beach Area Commission for 2006 to the Town of Hampton for inclusion in the Town Report.

Brian Warburton made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by Chuck Rage. The meeting adjourned at 9:05 pm.

It was determined that the next meeting would be held on February 22nd at 4 pm. A meeting place had not yet been secured, but the Police Department Training Room will be requested.