



Office of Board of Selectmen

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Selectmen's Meeting Minutes Tuesday, May 28, 2024, 10:00 am Belmont Mill, Tioga Meeting Room

Present were Chairman Ruth Mooney, Selectman Jon Pike, Selectman Sharon Ciampi, TA Alicia Jipson, Executive Assistant Colleen Akerman, Town Planner Karen Santoro, Land Use Technician Rod Cameron, Land Use Clerk Jenn Thomas, Police Chief Mark Lewandoski, Police Captain Stephen Akerstrom, Fire Chief Deb Black, and DPW Assistant Director Brian Jackes. Also present was Planning Board Member Kevin Sturgeon. Present from NHDOT were Jason Ayotte, Hans Weber, Dan Prehemo and Trent Zanes.

Selectman Travis O'Hara was present via Zoom.

Selectman Claude "Sonny" Patten, Jr. was absent.

Those present stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

NHDOT Discussion – Route 140 (Depot Street)/Main Street Intersection:

Jason Ayotte of NHDOT explained their team has initiated data collection and worked up concepts for the Route 140 (Depot Street)/Main Street intersection over the last two years, as well as working on the base mapping and surveying. There is still some NEPA investigation for sensitive resources taking place, which is required for federal funding.

This project entered the Ten-Year Plan (TYP) in 2017 with construction anticipated in 2026. Some engineering was completed in 2019-2020 after a meeting with the Town. Their team is looking for feedback from the Board and the community because they are not the experts on this intersection. The plan was developed as a concept to help determine the budget, which is currently \$450,000 for construction and a Right-Of-Way (ROW) budget of \$30,000. A prior concept was a bypass but Lakes Region Planning Commission (LRPC) brought forward another study for short-term, intermediate and long-term solutions. Firming up the options with the Board and the community will help to solidify federal funding.

Hans Weber of NHDOT reviewed the handouts presented to the Board. He will provide PDFs that can be made available on the Town website. A corridor study of Route 140 was completed a decade ago, and the team has reviewed that along with their own data collection. There is a crash history at the location with 28 accidents in 10 years related to the Depot Street stop. There is limited sight distance and the ROW is constrained, which happens in older towns. Buildings are close to the roadway and sidewalks. There is also a 7% upgrade at the

intersection. There are peak morning and evening hours where operational issues can be seen with vehicles queuing up a distance from the intersection.

One option is an all-way stop which would provide stop bars and signs at uncontrolled approaches and vehicles would trade off queueing. This provides operational improvements and is more balanced from a safety standpoint, but needs more conversation due to sight distances and access to businesses and residences. This option has no major permanent changes or acquisitions of property or easements. The concept meets federal traffic guidelines and would be appropriate for this intersection.

A second option is signals. This has a limited impact like the all-way stop. There would be signal mast arms above the intersection. Foundation work would be needed but there would be no acquisition of property or other major impacts. They are aware of the utilities in the intersection. This is an alternative long-term proposal from the corridor study but it does not meet traffic volumes for signal warrants. By policy this option would not be proposed for this location. It almost meets the outlook for 20 years but is not recommended at this time.

A third option is a southbound offset right-turn lane. This helps with the volume of traffic and indecisions of drivers. It pushes the traffic away and helps create a sight line. It does not address the sight distance concerns to the south. Chairman Ruth Mooney asked about moving the stop bar up further into the intersection, which could be considered. There may be some driveways and front yards impacted with this option but no houses.

A fourth option is realignment. It provides a three-legged T intersection and has a left turn lane while right turn movement continues west. It is higher impact than other options and does not meet the budget. Operationally, it works well because there would be no queuing except on Main Street. There are some ROW implications. This option may require some bridge work and would have impacts to property owners.

The last option is a roundabout. NHDOT are proponents of roundabouts because they reduce crash angles and work well operationally. They have used them in other areas with similar traffic volumes but for this project there would be many impacts to properties east of the bridge. Chairman Mooney had concerns about the size being sufficient for the larger tractor trailer trucks that travel this intersection. This option would require the acquisition of 4 properties, includes bridge impacts, and the cost for the roadway alone is \$4,500,000.

Selectman Jon Pike was concerned about the infrastructure under the intersection. Belmont DPW has provided NHDOT with copies of all of the utility plans. The elevation is a concern for DPW and they would want to explore replacing the line in tandem with this intersection project.

NHDOT wants to narrow down the alternatives. The signals do meet the warrants, even for 20 years out. The roundabout is not reasonable and needs a large budget and has significant impacts to properties.

Via Zoom, Selectman Travis O'Hara asked for Police Chief Mark Lewandoski and Police Captain Steve Akerstrom's opinions. They reported there is a new 4-way intersection in Gilmanton that is working efficiently, but it has good sight distance. Chief Lewandoski was concerned about large tractor trailers that get stuck on the hill at the Route 140 stop, especially in the winter. He likes the right-turn but he is concerned it is not sufficient for longer trucks to make the turns. Fie Chief Deb Black asked if there would be changes to the grade, but the plan does not change the grades. Land Use Technician Rod Cameron advocated for the signals because it is the most effective way of controlling the intersection and it can be controlled during peak hours to operate efficiently. He also suggested some type of traffic calming efforts on Main Street due to speed concerns. Mr. Ayotte reiterated that the traffic volume does not meet signal warrants and there would be no federal funding available to support it. Conduits could be installed for the future.

The all-way stop forces everyone to stop, slowing traffic in the intersection and everyone has to make direct eye contact which is safer for pedestrians.

Chairman Mooney spoke about the signals installed at Route 106 and Plummer Hill Road, which were not approved by the state. They were funded by local businesses. She asked about the location of traffic counts; concerned that the true numbers have not been seen due to so many seeking alternate routes such as Jamestown Road, South Road, Dearborn Street and Johnson Street before the intersection. Planning Board member Kevin Sturgeon agreed the traffic count needs to be completed before Jamestown Road. Mr. Ayotte stated it would be difficult to determine on a vehicle by vehicle basis which are local traffic and which are cut-throughs, but they can try to compare with other traffic count volumes on Route 140.

Selectman Sharon Ciampi asked about the most favorable options, which would be 1, 3 or 4. She explained how difficult it is to come down Main Street and take a left onto Route 140 because there is not a good line of sight. Vehicles pull into the intersection and then traffic that should be turning and flowing is stopping to let those stopped vehicles move out of the way. There are also buses back and forth twice a day with lots of heavy traffic. None of these options fixes those problems.

While the realignment was best for operations, it comes with significantly higher costs and impacts to relocate a business and multiple residences. There is less confusion with the all-way stop because everyone has to make eye contact and follow the rules of the road.

Chairman Mooney asked if there is negativity from the community, will this project disappear. NHDOT wants this intersection to be improved, but it is possible if there is no agreement with the state and the community, they could "no build" this. Public input is needed. If the all-way stop is chosen there are some long-term safety and operational studies that may be conducted to see if conditions have resolved.

The Board complimented the NHDOT team on their great ideas for alternative solutions for this intersection.

NHDOT would like to present all of the options at the public meetings because there is value for everyone to see all of the work done and why some of the concepts are not reasonable. TA Jipson suggested including some of the additional estimated costs such as for property acquisition or bridge work. She will help schedule a public hearing at Belmont High School. There was discussion about eminent domain, which is avoided as much as possible, and the potential impacts of losing 4 properties from the tax rolls.

Once the PDF documents have been provided by NHDOT they will be placed on the Town website for review.

Non-Public:

Chairman Mooney moved to enter non-public session in accordance with RSA 91-A:3 II (I) at 11:22 am; seconded by Selectman Pike. Roll Call 1: J. Pike – aye, S. Ciampi – aye, R. Mooney – aye. Motion passed unanimously (3-0).

Those present and voting were Chairman Ruth Mooney and Selectmen Jon Pike and Sharon Ciampi. Also present were TA Alicia Jipson and Executive Assistant Colleen Akerman.

The Board made a decision about a legal matter.

Selectman Pike moved to exit non-public session at 11:32am seconded by Selectman Ciampi. Roll Call 3: J. Pike – aye, S. Ciampi – aye, R. Mooney – aye. Motion passed unanimously (3-0).

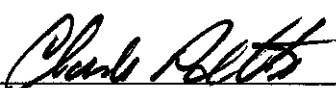
Selectman Pike moved to seal the minutes of the non-public session because the Board considered legal advice provided by legal counsel; seconded by Selectman Ciampi. Roll Call 4: S. Ciampi – aye, J. Pike – aye, R. Mooney – aye. Motion passed (3-0).

Adjournment:


Chairman Mooney moved to adjourn the meeting at 11:33 am; seconded by Selectman Ciampi. Roll Call 5: J. Pike – aye, S. Ciampi – aye, R. Mooney – aye. Motion passed unanimously (3-0).



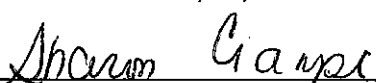
Ruth P. Mooney, Chairman



Claude B. Patten, Jr., Selectman



Travis O'Hara, Vice Chairman



Sharon Ciampi, Selectman



Jon Pike, Selectman