

Board of Selectmen
Workshop on Parking, opened at 7:11 pm
Tuesday, 5/20/14

A workshop was held on Tuesday, May 20, 2014 at 7pm with four Selectpersons, the Town Administrator and the Asst. to the Town Administrator, Selectperson Sheedy was not in attendance.

Selectperson Lucas moved that the Board of Selectmen accept and sign an easement from Gerard Boyle, Jr., and Julie Boyle, Trustees of 35 Granite Street Realty Trust and from Carole Judd, Trustee of 50 Beach Street Realty Trust, both granting the Town permanent easements to construct and maintain storm water drains, conduits, and related structures in, on, and under portion of their properties as shown on the plan entitled "Easement Plan Assessors Map18, Parcel 218A, 35 Granite Street, Rockport, MA prepared by Gateway Consultants, Inc., and dated January 7, 2014, seconded by Selectperson Murphy, Vote: 3-0, Selectperson Battistelli recused herself.

Senator Tarr meeting update on the Tool Company: Chairperson Wilkinson and Selectperson Battistelli said they were invited to Senator Tarr's office; this was a follow up the Community House Meeting. They said they learned how a project received local, state and federal approval. The applicant has received local approval (ConComm, etc), and the state is still reviewing Chapter 91 aspects. They've got a vested interest in whatever happens with the harbor. B. Tarr's office had indicated that they count on the Harbormasters for their input because they are the local authority. Selectperson Battistelli wrote a letter that reinforces the Harbormaster's letter. The Harbormaster's concerns were about navigation, etc. Even with DEP approval, nothing can proceed without local permits. There are on-land and in-water components for this project. The representative from the Army Corp. of Engineers said they are going to invite us to a meeting that they are going to have in their offices. They need a letter from the town and from the Harbormasters with their position/concerns on the project.

Parking Meters:

Officer Robert Tibert, Chief of Police McCarthy and Hank Betts were in attendance. The new parking meters were discussed. Selectperson Battistelli said we need a plan of action here, since there are several things that we're not satisfied with. The chief said there is an invoice on his desk for the internet access, he hasn't paid it yet. The meter is self-explanatory, but people aren't reading the instructions on the meters. There is one meter for two parking spaces; they are marketed "left" and "right". Officer Tibert has to re-set them and start them back up again. In the beginning the meters weren't coming up in the morning; that issue was resolved. Some of the mechanisms aren't taking coins properly. Today, three modems needed to be replaced, it's been very time consuming. Selectperson Lucas asked if the vendor can point us to someone who has gone through this already. Officer Tibert said many of the coins aren't going in the cups; they're staying in the meters. The issues of extended warranties were discussed. Chief McCarthy said he spoke to the President of the company and he assured the Chief that they would do whatever is necessary to make this work. There are 32 on Main Street, another 17 from Beach Street up to the end of King, then 5 at the end of the Neck. It was recommended finding another vendor to replace this vendor if they don't have a reliable product. Chairperson Wilkinson recommended giving them a deadline that we'll be taking the meters out if they're not working by a certain date. Since it's been three weeks since the Chief has spoken to the president of the company, she will give him a call. The Chief said since a software update, they have worked much better. They can be programmed to take a day off for a Holiday with a special message. Chairperson Wilkinson said we can't have people not returning to Rockport because of a negative meter experience. Selectperson Lucas said maybe we can ask the vendor what have they done in the past (sticker on the meter) to address some of the frequent problems.

Chairperson Wilkinson recommended a little “cheat sheet” for the store owners so they can help frustrated people who are visiting their shop.

8:00 pm: R. Tibert left the meeting

The Town Administrator said she is disappointed that the vendor has been paid. She said the contract comes first, then the equipment should have been delivered, installed and working before the final payment. The Town Administrator said for municipalities, the goods are delivered first then 100% is due. She said per 30(b), nothing should be paid for until it's complete and working. The Chief of Police said he approved the invoice and it was paid by accounting without benefit of a contract.

The Chief of Police said this is taking up a lot of Officer Tibert's time; he said he is frustrated to the point of wanting to return the meters at this point.

Parking – Transportation and Parking Strategy

There was not sufficient interest in town for individuals to sit on the parking committee.

Selectperson Lucas questioned the role of the Traffic committee. The Chief of Police and the Town Administrator are committee members. The Town Administrator said the Traffic Committee has no role in strategy; it is an enforcement and operations body. A parking issue would be brought to the attention of that committee. If the solution is not within the authority of the Traffic Committee, then the committee will bring it to the Board of Selectmen. Sometimes a hearing will be held if it affects the public.

The Town Administrator said there is a perception that there isn't enough parking in town. She said we haven't actually verified that; perhaps we need to utilize what we have better. We shouldn't rush to a solution unless we know what the problem is. We haven't got an assessment of our utilization and our capacity.

The issues with the train station and the roughness of the parking lot are concerns.

Repairing the drawbridge in Gloucester would have a significant impact on Rockport.

1. The Parking strategy must include the whole town and fit into the Master plan from the Planning Board.
2. The supply of public transportation and public parking should be balanced for workers, residents, and visitors.
3. How about an employee parking lot.
4. Start with resident parking within striking distance of where they live, if it doesn't exist, let's look at that.
5. Then go to businesses, do business owners and employees have parking within striking distance of where they work, if it doesn't exist; let's look at that.
6. Then the visitors, it should be a central location and they should pay for parking.
7. We could survey each of these groups asking for information.
8. The prime spots should cost the most because some residents put their cars in the best spots and leave their parking spots at home free/available for their guests.
9. Consider it a commodity or an amenity, friendly, minimize ticketing but not free, residents should be the least expensive.
10. Areas should be strategically located with optimum use of space.
11. We don't want parking facilities that negatively impact the character of the town.
12. Different areas in town (South End, Pigeon Cove) have different problems by district

13. Stimulate economy
14. Reduce negative environmental impact
15. Look at the beaches
16. Offer alternatives to driving (not minimize cars)
17. Pedi-cabs perhaps (can be a concern on narrow streets)
18. Bike hubs
19. Partnerships or collaborations with surface parking lots, etc. perhaps a network of them.
20. MAPC may be able to offer assistance
21. Create a parking inventory (GIS system can assist)
22. Policies should be based on what the goals end up being
23. Chairperson Wilkinson said we've always been revenue-based in the past for parking, we just want to solve the parking problem
24. We can have options that are more convenient and cost more, and options that allow visitors to come to Rockport and cost almost nothing.
25. Promoting the Park 'n Ride, a larger sign and how about a person with a flag to direct people.

T. Arsenian said he is pleased to hear that money isn't the priority and that the priority is residents, workers, then visitors. Also, he said a survey is a good idea. There is a downtown master plan, but no master plan for the whole town. Pigeon Cove will be a problem for parking, if the Tool Company moves forward; if the ferry is successful, there will be a need for parking.

Hank Betts said we need to think about impacting people's behavior. To change behavior, we need to charge more for the beaches and influence behavior; what's important about the 1, 2 or 3 hour meter?

Is it a question whether Rockport residents, in general, support the downtown economy; it would be helpful to know how often they shop downtown.

The Town Administrator said the first step is that it belongs to the Board of Selectmen. She asked that the Board review what was reviewed tonight and take anything off the list that the members don't support. She recommended starting with the goals; that will provide the path to the studies/surveys. The Town Administrator asked that the board members send comments on goals to her.

Hank Betts said he will pull out the work he put together a while ago. Chairperson Wilkinson said maybe we can do some small things fairly quickly that would improve parking to some degree.

9:10 pm Selectperson Murphy moved to adjourn, seconded by Selectperson Lucas, Vote: 4-0.

Warrant Signed:

Warrant signed for the Fiscal Year 2014 Payroll and Expenses for the week of 5/22/14 in the amounts of \$103,192.76 and \$138,309.75 respectively.

Items signed:

Army Corp of Engineers, Cape Ann Tool

Boyle easement

Carole Judd easement