



VPI TASK FORCE REPORT – Town of Rockport

DATE:7/26/22

START TIME:5:01PM

COMMITTEE:

CHAIR: Doug Cole

LOCATION: Richardson Room

IN ATTENDANCE: Mike Young, Doug Cole, Denise Munger, Sally Cook, Orion Thomas, Clare Tully, Michelle Gallant, Mary Jane Young (by phone). **ABSENT:** Jon Duke, Kimberlee Graffam. **GUEST:** Terry DeWan (by phone).

ITEMS DISCUSSED: Maine DOT meeting impressions; need for PPI study as part of VPI; possible new traffic study; budget for study; laundry list of possible village improvements.

Chair Cole called the meeting to order at 5:01PM. He asked members' to share their reactions to the July 22, 2022 Maine DOT meeting. Based on feedback shared by the Maine DOT team, members expressed concerns that it might be unlikely or even “a waste of time” to expect that the Goose River bridge project will result in bigger improvements to the Village. Terry DeWan commented favorably, however, about how Julie Brask had clearly laid out parameters during the meeting and on her professionalism overall.

Denise Kennedy Munger also appreciated Ms. Brask's followup with examples where federal 6F restrictions had been relaxed. She also noted that Historic Denver had succeeded in making some changes in a project that had been federally funded and that it didn't cost that much more.

Orion Thomas then discussed the need to do a Planning Partnership Initiative (PPI) study as a prerequisite to the VPI project. Mr. Thomas showed a slide describing some of the possible categories that could be supported by a study. He noted that there is a \$200,000 fund to provide matching funds for PPI studies. Mr. DeWan talked about a possible realignment of the bridge. Ms. Munger asked if the bridge was in the TIF. Mr. Thomas said he was not sure, that Bernstein Shur is revising the TIF but there's not much money in it.

Michelle Gallant noted that crossing the street near the bridge does not seem that safe. Mr. DeWan noted that Stantech is looking at safety issues. Mike Young added that he has a meeting coming up with the State about crosswalks. Doug Cole asked Mr. Thomas to reach out to Stantech.

The discussion then turned to the subject of possibly doing a new traffic study as part of a PPI. Ms. Gallant asked about the budget. Mr. Thomas said he would speak to Jon Duke. Clare Tully noted that two separate independent traffic studies had recently been

commissioned by Friends of Rockport and the Town and each had been conducted by qualified professionals. She noted that both addressed traffic safety issues and some findings were specific to the bridge, such as the safety of hotel bike valets and other cyclists. Mr. Thomas agreed to share both studies with the Task Force but noted that they are more hotel-specific in nature.

Mr. DeWan suggested using a “hierarchy of needs” to design a study, “think about crossing, how does Pascal tie in, relationship between the bridge and the two adjacent parks, the relationship between the bridge and the downtown.”

Discussion then ensued about the streets that should be included in a possible traffic study. Mr. Cole and Ms. Gallant advocated for a smaller more defined area within the Village, while Sally Cook advocated for a larger one, extending up Union to the Camden-Rockport sign. Ms. Cook also noted that the future sidewalk near Hannafords should be taken into account as it will allow residents to ride their bikes to the store.

Mr. DeWan suggested talking to traffic engineers about the streets to be selected and noted that the cost of studying a larger area likely would result only in an incremental increase. Mike Young mentioned the possibility of Gorrill Palmer. Mr. Cole asked about the cost of traffic studies and Mr. Thomas responded that the hotel one had cost about \$5500.

Ms. Munger and Ms. Tully both expressed concerns about commissioning a study too early in the process. Mr. DeWan agreed and suggested coming up with a “laundry list” of issues for the study to address. Mr. Cole then led the group in a discussion which collectively came up with the following issues:

1. Traffic calming on Pascal
2. Sidewalks on both sides of the bridge, with one connecting to the downtown near Nina June
3. Bike path over the bridge
4. Finding out why High Street has a 25 mph speed limit outside of Camden, while Pascal has a 30 mph one.
5. Addressing parking and traffic concerns on Central Street and adjacent side streets
6. Burying utilities underground on Central Street
7. Looking at traffic flow on Central Street, including possibility of one way only
8. Better safety lighting for the evenings

Ms. Tully asked why the burying of underground utilities was limited just to Central Street, noting that that location would benefit mostly one business. Mr. Cole responded that the study about the utilities had been paid for by a private donor and conducted by Gartley & Dorsey. Ms. Tully noted that also burying the utilities on Main Street opposite and near the bridge would benefit more businesses, the residents and tourists who use Marine Park, plus enhance Rockport’s historic district.

Mr. Cole motioned to adjourn the meeting at 6:16PM, which was seconded by several members. The next meeting will take place on August 8 at 5PM in the Richardson Room.