

VPI TASK FORCE REPORT - Town of Rockport

DATE: 9/19/22 START TIME: 4:35 PM

CHAIR: Doug Cole

LOCATION: Richardson Room

IN ATTENDANCE: Doug Cole, Denise Kennedy Munger, Kim Graffam, Mary Jane Young, Sally Cook (?), Michelle Gallant, Clare Tully (joining by phone) Jon Duke. Absent: Orion Thomas, and Mike Young.
GUEST: Representative Vickie Doudera

Chair Cole called the meeting to order. A motion was made to approve the draft minutes from the August 8 and August 30, 2022 meetings. Michelle Gallant (?) made an amendment to that motion, noting that she had not attended the August 8 meeting and that those meetings should be corrected to reflect her absence. The motion as amended was unanimously approved.

Chair Cole then changed the order of the agenda so that Jon Duke could provide an MDOT update. Jon noted that he and Orion had been talking to MDOT at a high level and were getting some mixed messages. He noted that MDOT was very positive at first last winter but was now inconsistent at best and felt very different to him now in terms of leadership.

Chair Cole said that the purpose of the VPI was to be transformative and provide a vision of Rockport for the future. He questioned whether it made sense to continue with the VPI given this MDOT update. Jon responded that the VPI Task Force should keep doing what we are doing because it will help to have a clearly defined plan, one that looks ahead from 2022 to 2042. He noted it might be that the funding won't come but he hopes it will and that a plan will help put the pieces together.

Michelle Gallant added that if we do the plan correctly, the info can be used further down the road whenever it's needed. Denise Munger expressed frustration about MDOT and suggested calling them on the mixed messages. Rep. Doudera asked who they had been talking to at MDOT and Jon responded Dale Doughty , Steve Cole and Doug Coombs. Jon said it might be helpful to talk to contractors like Gorrill Palmer who have worked on PPIs and figure out how to reverse engineer a successful application. Chair Cole proposed finalizing the letter of intent and bridge concept and putting together a nice plan. Michelle Gallant (?) inquired whether the state has published ratings on other bridges. Jon responded that the preliminary engineering has not yet been done and will happen this winter.

Rep. Doudera offered her help to reach out to MDOT or provide other assistance before leaving the meeting at 5:00PM.

Chair Cole then turned to the draft letter of intent. He began by thanking Linda Leshar for paying for the

services of Terry DeWan's group to provide some drawings of how the bridge could be revised. Ms. Gallant inquired whether the plans could fit on the existing level of the bridge. Mary Jane Young also asked whether a wider footprint would be required. Some discussion ensued about the current width of the bridge, including travel lanes and the sidewalk.

Clare Tully questioned the need to place a sidewalk on the harbor side to capture the ocean views when Pascal Avenue and the Marine Park already offer some excellent views of the Harbor. Ms. Munger responded that it's not so much about the views but having a nice continuous sidewalk leading from the bridge to Central Street. Ms. Tully noted that there isn't a sidewalk on that side of Pascal currently but there is a long continuous one on the other side, which runs all the way from Route 1 to Main Street. She urged the Town to consider how residents who currently walk on Pascal Avenue, Union Street, Summer Street or Main Street to exercise, walk their dogs or go to and from Cramer Park or the Post Office will make their way across the bridge if the bridge portion of it is eliminated.

Jon said it would be good to have a sidewalk on each side of the bridge but that the first thing to consider is whether it is even feasible. He noted that MDOT was proposing getting rid of some crossings and also noted that they do not like the stairs at the base of the sidewalks as they present an ADA issue. He also noted that he would hate to see parking up on side of the harbor, which he believes has value much beyond parking. He would prefer Cramer Park be used for this purpose or the winter boat storage area.

After discussion of some miscellaneous unrelated issues, Chair Cole returned to the topic of putting together a final letter of intent. He advocated for advancing a Cadillac plan and shooting for the moon. He asked Orion to prepare a printed package in advance of the next meeting. Mr. Duke that spoke briefly about the proposed \$100,000 budget request. Chair Cole mentioned that Mr. Thomas had spoken to an engineering firm which had quoted \$30,000 for a study, \$15,000 of which would be borne by Rockport if the PPI request succeeded. Mr. Duke noted that a pathway is being considered on Route 90.

Chair Cole adjourned the meeting at 5:54PM. The next meeting will take place on October 17, 2022 at 5PM in the Richardson Room.