

COMMITTEE REPORT – Town of Rockport

DRAFT

DATE: 4/24/24

START TIME: 10:30AM

COMMITTEE: VPI Task Force Force

CHAIR: Doug Cole

LOCATION: Richardson Room

IN ATTENDANCE: Doug Cole, Denise Kennedy Munger, Orion Thomas, Clare Tully, Sally Cook, Mary Jane Young, Jon Duke ABSENT: Mike Young, Kim Graffam, Michelle Gallant SEWALL: Diane Morabito, Brett Hart, Noah Boisvert .VIEWSHED: Eamonn Hutton MaineDOT: Steve Cole MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC: Kristin Johns

Chair Cole began the meeting at 10:31AM. He noted that because the final draft of the Traffic Infrastructure Study is the first one to include cost estimates, he had compiled a summary of them by project to share with the Committee. (*Orion*, please include this document with minutes). He mentioned that the document would help the Committee to prioritize the projects as a future meeting. Clare Tully mentioned that in addition to the numbers, the final draft included some proposed drawings for Cramer Park that had not been discussed with the committee, let alone the public. Mary Jane Young also mentioned the proposed design change for Mechanic and Winter Streets, which had been discussed at the recent public meeting, but had since generated more public comment. Chair Cole indicated that it would not be discussed at this meeting. Denise Kennedy Munger added that the meeting was not the time to discuss it. Clare said she thought that the purpose of the meeting was for the Committee to discuss the final draft with the consultants before it was finalized. Doug indicated that he would hold another Committee meeting so that the Committee could discuss the final draft together.

Diane Morabito began the presentation of the final draft Power Point. The subject of Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFB) was raised early in the discussion. Diane indicated that RRFBs are expensive and would be used sparingly. Chair Cole said he did not want to see a lot of flashing flights in Rockport Village. Clare said she thought that the RRFBs would only flash while pedestrians were in the crosswalk, which Diane confirmed. Someone else mentioned that the RRFB lights were solar.

Jon Duke asked a question about the transition from the bike lanes on Pascal to the sharrows on the bridge. Diane said cyclists and motorists could usually figure out the transition, sometimes with the help of additional signage. Doug asked about the painting of bike lanes. Diane responded that bike lanes are painted in Portland but it is also possible to just paint them at the beginning and the end. Clare asked Steve Cole if the member of the MaineDOT who specializes in bike safety will also review the proposed plans.

Kristin Johns asked a question about the relationship of the esplanade to the high sidewalk. Diane responded that the esplanade there would not be high and would be closer to the height of the road.

Kristin then asked about the parking design along Pascal and asked Diane why parking is being encouraged there. She said she was worried about motorists opening car doors into cyclists. Diane responded that people are already parking on Pascal, both people who live in the apartment building and who are patronizing the shops. Kristin responded that there is already parking behind the apartment building. She asked Diane how many spaces would be marked and Diane responded about 13 spaces. In response to Kristin, Steve Cole noted that the presence of parking spaces is also a traffic calming measure, just like a slightly narrower roadway.

The discussion then turned to the proposed addition of a second sidewalk on the Goose River Bridge overlooking the Harbor. Denise indicated that she thought it was looking good for a second sidewalk based on input from Julie Brask, Project Manager for the MaineDOT Bridge Program. Clare asked Diane whether the addition of the second sidewalk was dependent on there being enough space for it, as Julie had indicated that improvements would be limited by the fact the size of the deck replacement. She said she thought Julie had said that the replacement deck can't be that much bigger than the existing one. Diane responded that was the case because MaineDOT is not replacing the infrastructure. Clare then asked for confirmation that if MaineDOT ultimately determines that it cannot add a second sidewalk on the Harbor side due to space restrictions that the existing one on the Goose River side would still be retained. Diane confirmed that it would be retained, as did Denise. Clare thanked them for the confirmation, noting that the sidewalk on the Goose River side helps connect Pascal Avenue all the way to Route 1 for pedestrians.

Jon then asked Diane a question about how the proposed design meshed with the plan to add an ADA-compliant sidewalk on Main Street. Diane responded that the plans took this into account. It was mentioned that the addition of the ADA-complaint sidewalk would displace two parking spaces in front of the Main Street shops.

Jon raised an issue about sight lines on Main Street. Diane said a RRFB could be used on Main Street. Clare mentioned that at the public meeting, Joe Sternowski, the Chair of the Planning Board, had suggested the possibility of doing a raised crosswalk in front of the hotel to increase the visibility of pedestrians to drivers. Diane said that she thought that was a good idea and that she would support it. It was noted that sometimes Public Works staff don't like raised crosswalks due to maintenance challenges they can pose.

In discussing the possibility of more crosswalks on Main Street, Denise noted that despite the MaineDOT restriction of crosswalks being 400 feet apart, the crosswalks in downtown Camden seemed to be much closer together than that. Clare said that Denise's point was a good one and that she had noticed the exact same thing.

A discussion then ensued about the proposed plans to add a second sidewalk on the North side of Central Street so that drivers and their passengers could use the sidewalk to walk to

the crosswalk. Clare said that although the draft final report indicated that the Committee and the public both supported it, there are mixed opinions on the Committee and among the public about the substantial amount of construction that this would require and the impact on the neighboring properties. She noted that the sidewalk would only be created to serve several existing parking spaces. She observed that drivers and passengers routinely jaywalk across Central Street from their cars rather than walk to the crosswalk first, taking the fastest, most direct way to their restaurant reservation or the Opera House. Denise noted that some people also use these spaces when going to the Library. Diane responded that people might be jaywalking because they don't currently have a sidewalk to use. Diane said she strongly supported building a sidewalk in that location. Doug noted that jaywalking is part of human nature but that he also supported building a sidewalk. He also noted from personal experience that it is awkward for passengers to step out into a ditch when heading to the restaurants. He also mentioned that buildings previously had existed on that side of the street. Doug also stated that although he would prefer to have Committee consensus on the sidewalk, he was okay with noting some opposition.

Jon then noted that the Town right of way was very wide on a portion of lower Union Street. Some discussion ensued about establishing more parking on lower Union Street to serve the downtown area. Clare noted that she would favor this option over placing parking on a strictly residential street like Mechanic or Winter, because lower Union is already a mixed use street between the Library, the Post Office, and Graffams, and people already park on it. Denise noted that parking could not wrap all the way around from Union to Central Street because of the stone wall. Diane indicated that they would take another look at parking on Union as they wrapped up the report.

The discussion then turned to the subject of making Franklin Street one way. Diane noted that although parking could not be established on Franklin Street, making it one way from Central Street up to Church Street would make it safer because of its narrow width and height. She also noted that Franklin is so steep that having it one way going up was safer. She said that this would present the possibility of a motorist car heading down it losing control of their car and crashing on Central Street, especially in winter. Sally Cook raised the possibility of restricting left hand turns onto Franklin from Central Street to avoid holding up traffic and to discourage its use as a cut through. After some back and forth, Diane indicated that she did not think it was a good idea to restrict left hand turns onto Franklin.

Eamonn Hutton then noted that he had just looked up the distance between the crosswalks on Elm St/Route 1 in downtown Camden and they were between 100 and 200 feet apart. Some Committee members turned to Steve Cole and kidded him about Rockport being held to stricter standards than Camden. Eamonn then presented the three parking design concepts for Cramer Park, prefacing his remarks by acknowledging that Cramer Park is a wild park that is loved by locals. He noted that he is a park planner and tried to limit the impact of parking on the park. One of the design concepts eliminates the boat trailer loop entirely. Clare asked about the longtime use of Cramer for trailer boat parking. She said she heard that NOAA funds had been used in Cramer Park for this purpose to supplement trailer parking in Rockport Marine Park. Kristin Johns said she had also heard this from a High Street resident. Eamonn responded that he knew a lot about federal funding for the

Harbor Park improvements and that he did not think that NOAA funds had been used. Clare noted that the consultants had only ever talked to the Committee about creating several pocketed spaces so she asked why one drawing now included 30 spaces, which would dominate the park with parking. Diane responded that “If you’re going to go to all the trouble and expense of paving the road into the park and paving several spaces, you might as well consider paving 30 spaces.” Additional discussion ensued about Cramer Park.

Steve Cole then complimented the consultants on their final draft report, noting that it was written in a way that is much more accessible and understandable to read than most of the reports he sees from consultants. Chair Cole added his thanks to the consultants. The consultants and Steve Cole left shortly after noon, when the official part of the meeting ended.