

## **COMMITTEE REPORT – Town of Rockport**

**DATE:1/18/24**

**START TIME: 10:30AM COMMITTEE: VPI Task Force**

**CHAIR: Doug Cole**

**LOCATION: Richardson Room**

**IN ATTENDANCE: Doug Cole, Denise Kennedy Munger, Orion Thomas, Clare Tully, Sally Cook, Mary Jane Young, Kim Graffam (via video), Michelle Gallant, and Mike Young. MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC: Bob Kollmar**

**ABSENT: Jon Duke**

**ITEMS DISCUSSED: Preparation for January 24, 2024 meeting with Julie Brask of MaineDOT**

**Chair Cole called the meeting to order at 10:30AM. Michelle Gallant made a motion to accept the minutes from the December 14, 2023 meeting as revised with the corrections submitted by Kim Graffam via email. Sally Cook seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.**

**Orion Thomas then shared the letter that the Task Force had written to Julie Brask on April 21, 2023 which listed its highest priorities for the bridge, including: sidewalks on both sides; good lighting; electrical conduit underneath; bike lanes; aesthetic of railings, understructure and color. Chair Cole inquired about the format of the meeting with Julie, noting that she would likely begin by updating the committee on the condition of the bridge. Orion noted that Julie had requested a copy of Sewall/Viewshed's draft design plans.**

**The members agreed that the priorities mentioned in the April 21, 2023 largely remained the same. Clare Tully noted that adding bike lanes, as opposed to the sharrows subsequently recommended by Sewall/Viewshed in the design plans, likely would not leave space for a second sidewalk on the Harbor side of the bridge, which is a high priority. She noted that Julie Brask had previously indicated that if the deck replacement option was chosen, with the existing superstructure remaining intact, only a few extra feet could be added to the deck of the bridge. This could create a conflict between a second sidewalk and two full bike lanes, as opposed to two sidewalks with two sharrows. Chair Cole and Mary Jane Young both mentioned the need to get more clarity from Julie about how much the deck could be widened. Orion Thomas noted that MaineDOT was not willing to expand the bridge on the Harbor side at all due to federal restrictions on encroaching on Rockport Marine Park, because federal funds were used to improve the Park. Clare also noted that with respect to the aesthetics of the railing and understructure, it was important to ensure**

**that the design choices are compatible with the designation of much of the downtown Village, including the bridge, as a Rockport Historic District by the National Register of Historic Places. She added that Julie had previously mentioned that a member of MaineDOT's team has a specialty in working with historic structures.**

**Denise Kennedy Munger then expressed interest in learning more from Julie about how long MaineDOT anticipated the 70-year-old infrastructure would last. If a new deck is built for it now, she asked, at what point does MDOT need to replace the infrastructure under it? What is the lifespan of the rest of the bridge?**

**Bob Kollmar mentioned that it was possible to get a copy of the bridge inspection report, which is a matter of public record. Orion said he would get a copy and distribute it.**

**Clare noted that Bob had also inquired about the survey comments that he and other members of the public had made in response to a survey from Sewall/Viewshed. As the members have not yet seen those comments, Clare asked Orion to get the survey results from Viewshed to share with the Task Force.**

**Clare also mentioned the subject of lighting on the bridge which was mentioned in the April 21, 2023 letter. She noted that it would be ideal if the lighting on the bridge is tailored to ensure pedestrian safety on the bridge without unnecessarily flooding the Rockport Harbor and Goose River waters below, the night sky above, or neighboring residences with too much light. Orion noted concerns about light pollution in the Village and felt the Town would have input in choosing the lighting, further into the design phase.**

**The next meeting will take place on January 24, 2024 at 9AM in the Richardson Room. Chair Cole adjourned the meeting at 10:50AM.**