

PLANNING BOARD MINUTES

August 23, 2006

ROLL CALL:

| | |
|--|---|
| Phil LoChiatto, Chairman – Present | Ruth-Ellen Post, Vice Chairman – Present |
| Nancy Prendergast, Secretary – Present | Walter Kolodziej, Regular Member – Excused |
| Ross McLeod, Regular Member – Present | Pam Skinner, Regular Member – Present |
| Neelima Gogumalla, Alternate – Present | Rick Okerman, Alternate – Present |
| Margaret Crisler, Selectmen Member – Present | Alan Carpenter, Selectmen Alternate – Excused |

STAFF:

Al Turner, Director of Planning and Development – Present
Rebecca Hebert, Town Planner – Present

OTHERS PRESENT:

Mr. Bill Cass, NHDOT Assistant Director of Project Development
Mr. Bill Oldenburg, NHDOT Chief of Preliminary Design

Mr. LoChiatto opened the meeting at 7:30 pm. Mr. Okerman replaced Mr. Kolodziej.

Mrs. Crisler extended a warm thank you to Mr. Benson for coming out to cablecast the meeting on such short notice, and announced that Mr. Benson received the Volunteer of the Year Award at Monday night's Selectmen's meeting.

WORKSHOP WITH NH DOT – ROUNDABOUTS & TRAFFIC CALMING:

Mr. Turner gave a brief introduction: There are currently four roundabouts in Town. NHDOT has suggested a roundabout at the entrance to the new high school. NHDOT is here to discuss pro's and con's of roundabouts. The intent of this meeting is to gather information for evaluating roundabouts.

Mr. Cass: Traffic volumes at the high school do not warrant a signal. Community has raised concerns that stop signs are not enough. NHDOT suggests that a roundabout may meet the needs.

Mr. Oldenburg distributed a pamphlet from US Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration about roundabouts.

Mr. Oldenburg: Roundabouts are not rotaries. Rotaries do not work. Rotaries are designed for higher speeds and no stopping or yielding. Roundabouts are the safest form of intersection control. Roundabouts are designed for 20-25 mph speeds and incorporate yielding and stopping. A roundabout can accommodate twice as many cars as a rotary because lower speeds allow cars to enter with less of a gap in traffic. There are over 25,000 roundabouts in Europe and over 1,000 currently in the US. Many states used roundabouts. New York State prefers roundabouts to any other type of intersection and requires developers to prove that a roundabout will not work before allowing signalized intersections. Roundabouts can replace stop signs and signals. They can handle large or low volumes of traffic. Roundabouts are designed to accommodate vehicles of all sizes, bikes and pedestrians. Roundabouts can be one lane or two lanes of traffic. Mr. Oldenburg identified locations of roundabouts in NH. Roundabouts are smaller than rotaries, have islands that reflect vehicles and cannot be entered faster than 25 mph, and the safest form of intersection control. NHDOT currently have some roundabouts under construction but do not yet have any in operation. Roundabouts currently in operation were installed at the local level.

Mr. Oldenburg gave the following statistics regarding benefits of a roundabout, and also he explained how easy it is to drive through a roundabout. Roundabouts become more efficient as people learn to drive around them.

Lives saved:

- Up to a 90% reduction in fatalities – only 0 or 1 death has occurred in the US at a roundabout.
- 75% reduction in injury crashes.
- 30-40% reduction in pedestrian crashes
- 75% fewer conflict points than four way intersections

Slower vehicle speeds (under 30 mph)

- Drivers have more time to judge and react to other cars or pedestrians
- Advantageous to older and novice drivers
- Reduces severity of crashes
- Keeps pedestrians safer
- Reduces conflict points for cars and pedestrians

Efficient traffic flow

- 30-50% increase in traffic capacity

Reduction in pollution and fuel use

- Improved traffic flow for intersections that handle a high number of left turns
- Reduced need for storage lanes

Community Benefits

- Traffic calming
- Aesthetic landscaping

Discussion: Cost to build is 20% higher than a signalized intersection. Payback can be made through electricity and maintenance cost savings as compared to a signalized intersection. Because a roundabout does not need turning lanes, the road may not need to be widened as would be required with signalized intersections. Roundabout is a moving queue versus a dead stop. Two lanes enter the roundabout, one goes straight and the other takes a left. Vehicle delays with a roundabout is less than delays with signals. Mr. Oldenburg suggested the Board go onto the internet and download a video called The Wisconsin Experience which shows a roundabout in front of a high school. Fear of the unknown and dislike of rotaries cause initial concern and hesitation about roundabouts. Opinions change once a roundabout is installed and operating. A roundabout will not work with grades above 4%, in areas of high pedestrian traffic, and at skewed intersections. Roundabout designs incorporate splitter islands and bypass lanes. Roundabouts can be used as an entrance or gateway.

Public input received from Gail Webster, Bruce Anderson representing the School Board, Jeff Santacruz on behalf of the School Board, Brad Mesquita on behalf of the School Board, Galen Stearns, Wayne Morris, and Roger Hohenberger.

Public concerns: Plowing may require a reverse plow or smaller trucks. The truck apron is the difficult area for plowing.

Mr. Satacruz presented preliminary designs of a signalized intersection versus a roundabout at the entrance to the school.

Public concerns regarding a roundabout on Rte 111 entrance to the high school: Cost is a major concern to the School Board. Preliminary design shows extensive grading of school property and impacts to

wetland. Concerns were raised of whether novice drivers can understand the signage and whether a roundabout would be more difficult for novice drivers to maneuver. Questions were raised about the function of the Ledge Road intersection and whether tractor-trailer can navigate through the intersection. Two lane movements appear confusing. Will cars heading eastbound on Route 111 toward Route 93 be queuing up while westbound cars heading into the school have the right of way? Can misaligned intersections work? NHDOT is currently constructing the Route 111 bypass project in Town and is installing a traffic signal at the Roulston Road intersection that is expected to see similar traffic patterns as the high school. Can NHDOT work with the Town in providing a signalized intersection instead of stop signs or a roundabout?

Based on personal experience in Alaska, which has two lane roundabouts on either side of their interstate, Mr. McLeod feels that the geometry and the striping of a roundabout creates an environment that allows for movements in and out that are easily navigated.

Mr. Oldenburg: NHDOT would not have designed the roundabout to the high school as presented. If the intersection can work with a traffic signal or stop signs, it will work with a roundabout more efficiently. Broad Street in Nashua has a roundabout outside of a high school that sees 200 school buses a day. This situation in Nashua would be similar to this location on Rte 111. NHDOT did not consider a roundabout at the Roulston Road intersection only because the design was done in 1997 and information and statistics were not available. If NHDOT were designing that intersection now, a roundabout would be considered. NHDOT will work with the Town. Sometimes, under unusual circumstances, a traffic signal may be installed although the traffic counts do not warrant it. Traffic reports from Ledge Road Industrial Park will need to be incorporated. NHDOT has their report however it assumes a signalized intersection.

Discussion: Staff will draft a letter to the Police Chief and Fire Chief asking, in general, of the merits of a roundabout versus a signalized installation. Guidelines exist for landscaping of roundabouts that keep lines of sight open. Planning Board can request neighboring developments to contribute toward their fair share costs of improvements to the intersection at the high school. Mr. Turner described the process for obtaining and requesting monies for offsite improvements.

Information and statistics on roundabouts can be found at Federal Highway Administration website: www.tfhrc.gov.

MINUTES:

Approval of minutes will be tabled until August 30, 2006 to allow collection and review of all comments. Amended minutes will be distributed prior to August 30.

BONDS:

Mr. McLeod Motioned to call insurance bond #S-217376 in the amount of \$38,207.82 for the site development on Lowell Road. The bond is being called because of lack of progress on the site, lack of work in general, and to mitigate any Town liability should the road not be built. Seconded by Ms. Skinner. Passed 7-0. Discussion: Planning Board would prefer that this particular area be returned to vegetated state. Planning Board may rescind its prior approval but will look with guidance from Attorney Campbell prior to pursuing.

CORRESPONDENCE:

- Copy of a letter to National Grange Mutual Insurance Company from Mr. Turner regarding the Bond for Pawtucket Road;
- E-mail from Cliff Sinnott regarding RPC expiration dates for Lee Maloney, Annette Stoller, and

Peter Griffin. Ms. Post motioned to recommend to the Board of Selectmen that they appoint Mrs. Annette Stoller to the RPC for another 4 year term. Seconded by Mr. McLeod. Passed 7-0.

Discussion: Great thanks to all of the members that serve on the RPC.

- Memo to the Selectmen from Al Turner requesting to reappoint Peter Griffin to the RPC for another 4 year term;
- Letter from the Rock Pond Improvement Association regarding that only RPIA speaks for the majority of the Rock Pond property owners;
- Letter from Al Turner informing the Board that Glen Greenwood will be at the August 30, 2006 workshop to discuss highway improvement impact fees;
- Confidential legal correspondence from Attorney Campbell regarding Great Mt View Estates.

LIASON:

- Mrs. Crisler: Board of Selectmen has tabled the discussion on building the Faith Road roundabout. The new road and Ridgemont Road will have stop signs. The Selectmen have asked for comments from Highway Safety as to whether stop signs are also needed on Faith Road at this four-way intersection. Selectmen feel that the roundabout does address all of the safety concerns raised by the neighbors. However, neighbors are in opposition to the roundabout and submitted a petition to the Selectmen. The Selectmen will monitor the intersection and will use bond money to construct a roundabout if that determination is made.
- Ms. Post: CIP first meeting will be held on Thursday, August 24, 2006 at the Nesmith Library.

Mr. McLeod motioned to adjourn. Seconded by Mr. Okerman. Passed 7-0. Meeting adjourned at 10:15 pm.

These minutes are in draft form and have not yet been reviewed and approved
Respectfully submitted, Nancy Prendergast