

Board of Selectmen's Meeting Minutes
Monday May 30, 2012
7:00 pm Town Hall

DRAFT

Present - Chairman Jack O'Reilly, Selectmen Jan Stuart and Rick Stern, Matt Upton, Tom Morgan, Dennis Hebert, Jack Pare, Gail Pare, Eric Weinrieb, Keith Cota, Christopher Waszczuk, Steven Ireland, Charlie Blackman, and Leila Richardson.

DOT Highway Expansion

The purpose of this meeting is to discuss changes to be made in relation to the Route 16 expansion. This expansion will eliminate the median in Newington, creating 8 lanes. Exit 2 will be eliminated, with Exit 3 becoming a full interchange, and intersection upgrades between the mall and Walmart.

Introductions were made by Chr. O'Reilly.

Throughout the meeting Keith Cota, Chief Project Manager, was the primary speaker for DOT.

The meeting began with DOT's concerns regarding traffic control. DOT will be using town roads to maintain traffic flow during construction. All traffic control is to be handled by DOT flaggers, not police officers. It was stressed that police officers not be involved in traffic control. All agreed that this would not be an issue.

Matt Upton then spoke on behalf of the town. He asked DOT what they felt the purpose of the meeting was. Were they looking for approval, so that the project can go out to bid?

Keith Cota indicated that the sole purpose of the meeting is to reach an understanding regarding control of the roads. He stressed the number of "improvements" that would be made, and that they would ultimately expect the town to take over maintenance of certain sections.

DOT presented an agreement outlining responsibilities. They would like these to be very clear. For example, DOT will construct sidewalks along Woodbury Ave., if town will take responsibility for them. If the town will not accept responsibility, sidewalks will not be constructed.

Matt Upton asked whether one sidewalk had been eliminated from the plans. DOT indicated that there will be only one sidewalk on the North/East side of Woodbury. S. Stuart felt that a sidewalk on the mall side of the road would be the town's preference.

Tom Morgan asked whether the plans would allow space for a future sidewalk. They would.

The planned sidewalks are to be 5 feet wide, with a paved surface, and concrete at intersection turndowns. The cost to build the sidewalks will be approximately \$150,000.

Matt Upton inquired about pavement vs. concrete sidewalks. Keith Cota indicated that that would be an option, if the town would be willing to pay the difference in cost, approximately \$70,000.

Mr. Upton then raised the issue of the likelihood of the new Woodbury Ave. configuration causing the town stress, given that there are already significant issues with traffic jamming up.

Keith Cota expressed that DOT expects that an improved traffic signal and additional lane at Arboretum Drive will alleviate this issue.

Eric Weinrieb expressed concern about traffic ques at the malls. He also believes that Walmart will leave their current location.

Dennis Hebert brought up the issue that Newington public comment was done on these issues prior to knowing that Woodbury Ave. would be turned over to the town.

DOT will be putting in a maintenance facility at the location of the old drive-in. It was asked whether there would be a noise barrier. Chris Waszczuk expressed that this would not be necessary, given the size of the property.

The current temporary access road along Route 16 is to be retained as a bike path. There is also sufficient shoulder space alone Woodbury Ave. to allow for a bike path.

Matt Upton brought up discussion of possible installation of a traffic signal at Walmart. Keith Cota said that this would require right of way acquisition on historic property in that area.

DOT said that there has been a 20-year analysis regarding traffic lights in the area, and does not think one is needed at Walmart. The full-access interchange to be built at Exit 3 is expected to create easy access to Woodbury Ave. businesses.

The issue of a grader for maintenance of Woodbury Ave. was raised. DOT said that for decades a grader was not used, and it is not necessary.

It is expected to cost Newington \$20,000 per year to maintain Woodbury Ave. Sidewalks will not be plowed.

S. Stern asked whether the state has ever entered into an agreement with a town for maintenance at a fee. That has not been done. DOT believes that they are already doing a lot for Newington, by investing \$260 million dollars in improvements in the area.

Matt Upton said that values in mall properties have been steadily dropping, and expects that losing the on-ramp will cause them to drop further.

Chr. O'Reilly suggested that the town have a traffic study done right away.

Keith Cota inquired about original commitments made to the mall by the town, and which areas were private property. He said there is still time to make intersection adjustments.

The town will also be expected to take over the to-be-built Mitchell Lane, which will be the access road to the DOT buildings at the old drive-in.

There will be time for public comments regarding the maintenance building at the old drive-in. Tom Morgan mentioned that the town envisioned a high end office park, which would bring jobs. He felt that this would be a better use of the 16 acres, and that a maintenance facility could be put in Dover.

Eric Weinrieb asked about signal maintenance. The state will not maintain the new traffic signals. Currently, there is only one signal in town, maintained by Portsmouth. The town will have to hire someone to maintain the traffic signals.

Due to the many issues involving Woodbury Ave., Chr. O'Reilly suggested that we break up the MOU, leaving Woodbury Ave. separate. DOT had anticipated this request, and had prepared the MOU in this manner.

Matt Upton will read the MOU agreement, excluding the Woodbury Ave. portion, and it will be brought to a vote at the June 4th Selectmen's meeting. Mr. Upton will provide copies, as 3 signed copies are required.

The sidewalks will not be built until the 3rd year into the project, so there is still time to consider how the town would like those handled. However, DOT cannot be held to the approximate quoted cost of \$70,000 to make them cement, instead of asphalt.

Dennis Hebert wanted to ensure that there would be a bicycle path up the old Spaulding Turnpike. This will be the case.

The DOT project is expected to begin in the fall, with bids ending on June 20th.

S. Stuart made a motion to adjourn, seconded by S. Stern. Meeting adjourned at 8:25pm.

Respectfully Submitted, Leila Richardson