

Lake Mansfield Improvement Task Force
Minutes of Monday, May 13, 2019 meeting

Present: Jeff Cohen (Conservation Commission), Brandee Nelson (Planning Board), Dale Abrams (Lake Mansfield Alliance), Ilana Siegal (Parks Commission), and Christine Ward (Citizen at large).

Absent: Bill Cooke (Selectboard), Peter Franck (Citizen at large)

Staff Present: Chris Rembold, Shep Evans

TOWN CLERK
GREAT BARRINGTON
JUL 31 2019 AM 11:11

Mr. Rembold called the meeting to order at 6:00.

1. Administrative Business

Cohen moved to approve the minutes of February 27 and April 17, 2019, Nelson seconded, all were in favor.

2. Lake Mansfield Road

Mr. Rembold explained the purpose of the meeting was for the Task Force to discuss and make a recommendation to the Selectboard on a long term permanent design for Lake Mansfield Road, particularly the section between the boat launch and the beach. He summarized possible options which include road closure to vehicles, a one-way road, or a narrow two-way road.

Ward gave a brief history of the planning and design work that has transpired over the last decade or two, including the 2016 comprehensive planning process, and the recently completed engineering study. She said that after many years we are at a decision point and we know enough to move forward. We have learned that having a road in this space will cost \$1 million. She said 500 cars per day is not a lot of cars to divert to other areas, like Main Street. She said we will not make everyone happy with our recommendation and will disappoint some people.

Abrams said he feels there is a shared understanding, after many years, that the situation is very complicated.

Cohen said we have some decisions to make. If our priority is for the health of the lake, then there should not be a road. We could recommend road closure and that would preclude other decisions, and would not require the Town to spend much money. He said 500 cars is not a lot for Main Street, but it is for this space, with the lake and pedestrian safety in mind. On the other hand, if we recommend that some sort of road remain, then we have a series of other decisions to make, and we have to invest a lot of money.

Nelson said should couldn't support a road closure after all that we have heard from our process. She said we must understand the cost impacts either way. If we make an investment, we have to make a wise investment.

Siegal said she feels the weight of our recommendation and wants the Selectboard to realize that they can close it if they feel that is best option, but this Task Force is trying to come up with creative solutions too.

Nelson said if the road was closed there is some part of the population that could not access the lake. Abrams said people could still get to the north or south end, but not through the space.

Cohen said our job as a task force is to preserve the asset, which is the lake.

Rembold clarified that the Task Force was discussion closure, they meant closure to all vehicles, between the boat launch and the beach, but the existing driveways would have some access from the north.

Motion: Cohen moved, Nelson seconded, to recommend to the Selectboard as Option 1, that Lake Mansfield Road be closed to all vehicles between the boat launch and the beach, except for emergency access.

In discussion, Ward said that financially, closure makes sense. She said for the lake, closure makes sense. She added she thinks we could have both vehicle access and protection of the lake, but it will mean big bucks. Abrams said we have heard that citizens want some access maintained. He said he thinks that there are grants for recreation paths, even if they include some emergency vehicle access. Cohen said we are here to protect the lake and we should be the leaders on this.

The Task Force members made some clarifying comments about what this meant, including that no vehicles would be allowed, that there might be a barrier against vehicles, and only emergency vehicles could go through, but that there would be a recreational path. The details would have to be worked out in design.

Vote: 3 in favor, 2 against (Nelson, Siegal)

The Task Force discussed a second option in the event the Selectboard does not adopt the first option.

Motion: Ward moved, Cohen seconded, to recommend as Option 2 to the Selectboard, that Lake Mansfield Road be a one-way shared road from south to north, from the Boat Launch north to the Beach Area. The design must provide for the stabilization of the road base, the mitigation of stormwater, the stabilization of the lake bank, and the re-creation and strengthening of lakeside buffer areas. It must also employ traffic calming measures to control speed and enhance safety for all users. Considerations that enhance access for fishing should also be included. This road design should accommodate access for the private land owner and East View Pool Club.

Vote: 5 in favor, 0 against

Citizen's Speak Time

Jane Stanhope asked the Task Force to clarify the emergency access question. Rembold said the Task Force recommendation includes a provision for emergency vehicles.

Ed Abrahams asked the Task Force to clarify access for the pool club and residential driveway, and to discuss whether there could be on-street parking south of the boat launch.

Mike Maguire said he is supportive of the recommendation on closure.

Cindy Schoenfeld asked about costs and whether Option 1 would cost less. Rembold said he thinks so. She also asked about working with property owners. Rembold said if portions of the bank are private then bank stabilization would have to be done with permission of the property owners.

Dave Ryel asked why the decision is for a south-to-north direction and not the other way. He said the recommendation is a violation of the town's complete street policy and master plan policies. He said the recommendation will cut off emergency access from the north to the south. He said there are other reasons why he disagrees with the decision.

Jill Schoenfeld asked why there was no discussion of the consultants' recommendations of best practices, and whether there will be a referendum on the funding. Ward said the Task Force decision was informed by many years of study but we could not discuss it all tonight.

Gary Happ said this road is a no win situation, but the recommendation to close the road is the most logical and best option on many levels.

3. The next meeting will be: TBD

4. The meeting adjourned at 7:20 PM

Minutes prepared by:

