

Submitted By:
JMY

TOWN OF PHIPPSBURG
SELECTMEN'S MEETING

Approved By:

MINUTES

September 7, 2005

Called to order at 7:00 p.m. with Selectmen Douglass and Perkins present.

1. Review and Sign:

- Accounts payable and payroll warrants.

All items reviewed and signed.

2. Meetings and Hearings:

- Meet with John Picher, State Parks and Lands, to discuss Popham and Popham Beach Park upgrades.

The meeting was held with John Picher (Parks and Lands - Realty), Elaine Clark (General Services), Susan Moreau (DOT) and Tom Desjardin (Parks and Lands Historian) and various members of the Popham community.

John Picher stated that he was attending the meeting in order to discuss plans, listen to concerns and objections, and to hear what everyone has to say before putting anything in writing. Although the State Parks and Lands would like to do some upgrades to Popham State Park, they don't want to dramatically increase visitation to the properties due to the current parking and staffing.

Mr. Picher gave an overview of his plans for Fort Popham and Popham State Park. He explained that State Parks and Lands would like to:

(1) Hire engineers to inspect the Fort and make recommendations to stabilize it from further deterioration (some of the walls are moving away from each other and bricks are falling.) They hope to eventually open the 2nd floor. There is a possibility of receiving a \$100,000 grant from the National Trust for Historic Places. This entire project could end up costing between 1 and 2 million dollars. The State would like to get a "Friends Group" together and raise money through fundraisers and grants. He explained that most of the money would have to come from public or private partnerships. They don't want to create more traffic because of the minimal parking at the Fort. It is estimated that between 75,000 and 80,000 people visit the Fort per year and between 136,000 and 217,000 use the Park as a whole. It was explained that it is hard to track the Fort visitors because no one pays for entry and there is not always a ranger there.

(2) Install more toilets at the Park, which could consist of waterless urinals and composting toilets.

(3) Have a better water system at the Park. They understand the problem with brackish water and will probably drill a water supply well removed from the beach so that it doesn't affect the wells of abutters.

(4) Find alternatives to parking such as using satellite lots across from the beach or at Spirit Pond. Perhaps a cooperative venture between DOT and the Town for transportation could take place. Also, consideration should be given for a bikeway from Spirit Pond etc.

Representative Leila Percy recommended using an existing group of people a "Friends Group" rather than creating a new one.

Bob Butler said that at a prior meeting held in Popham with the Maine Tourism Association, it was determined that Popham has as many people as it can handle during July and August. John Picher stated that the beach has plenty of room for people, however the Fort is limited. The problem is getting people to the beach without causing traffic problems. Selectman Douglass stated that even if more parking was available we wouldn't want more people because of traffic and road issues.

Brian Murray said that parking has gotten better because the crowds are more consistent throughout the day rather than everyone coming at one time. He felt that parking and traffic went well this year.

John Picher stated that the number of vehicles never exceeded 700 in 1980 the weekend average was 500. The parking lot was expanded slightly a few years ago and use might now barely exceed 700 per day. Selectman Douglass said that besides the beach, there was traffic going to the stores, church, and other attractions. John Picher stated that there had been a traffic survey conducted. Les Smith mentioned that he did not have it with him.

Susan Moreau explained that DOT was going to conduct a study and minimize traffic flow in Popham. Selectman Douglass discussed the free bus system at Acadia National Park. Ms. Moreau explained the Acadia system (Island Explorer) was the first system developed and it started with 8 vehicles and is adding an additional 12. She further explained that a business plan had been developed so they could get more operations money. A second system has been developed in Bethel called the "Mountain Explorer". In this case the local businesses and municipality got together and approached DOT with a plan. It has been operating for two years. She also stated that another system is currently planned for Carrabassett. In the case of Phippsburg, we have traffic congestion and parking is dangerous along the road. As improvements are made to State Park there can be incentives in place to use shuttles transportation (i.e. cheaper entry fee). DOT could conduct a study along the same lines as Parks and Recreation. They could also help with infrastructure such as "park and rides", signs etc.

John Picher stated that it can be scary for a small town to take on a project such as this, but the Bureau of Parks and Lands would have problems trying to do it themselves. Perhaps the solution would be a non-profit organization under the Town's jurisdiction to operate the transportation system.

Leila Percy asked if Reid State Park has the same parking problems. Susan Moreau replied that she had looked at Reid State Park and the problems may be different between the two parks. However, Popham State Park could be the pilot project and Reid State Park could be involved with the dialogue. John Picher said that the project could even involve Bath and there are a lot of different opportunities for a cooperative effort.

Selectman Douglass asked if funding was available for bike paths. Susan Moreau stated that there were some federal funds available, however there is a priority of who needs them. This could be part of a phased in project. John Picher mentioned that DOT has a bicycle coordinator and that the Bureau of Parks works closely with DOT concerning bike trails.

Chief John Skroski stated that he welcomes the effort to control traffic and parking. He further stated that Brian Murray and his staff have made tremendous efforts to control traffic and the Police Department has only issued 250 tickets this

year. He would like to see the shoulders of Route 209 paved for parking and bikes and also improvements in the Park infrastructure.

Selectman Douglass stated that some shoulder sections of Route 209 are wide but not paved for bikes. Rather than putting in a bike path the paving of shoulders to Popham, Small Point and Sebasco should be considered. This is a safety issue. DOT has stated that they would pave widened shoulders when they do major improvements to Route 209, however the last time they paved the road they didn't even skim coat the shoulders.

John Picher asked how many parking places were needed now and then stated that no matter how many were built they would fill up.

Steve Norris asked if there was some prior plan to improve boat traffic along the coast. John Picher replied that you could modify Popham Pier to enable docking of tour boats and private boats and the Town wouldn't be totally on the hook to manage it. The State may want to look at limiting parking hours at the Fort parking lot so that there would be more turnover and the recreational fishermen wouldn't be tying up the parking spaces for 6 hours. They should be encouraged to go to the larger beach.

Bill Perkins asked if a Popham group came together (i.e. "Friends Group") would the Park and Lands provide consultation and support. John Picher replied that the State would support it and he would hope that the Town would also be involved.

Leila Percy stated a concern that the State Park is at its visitor limit due to the number of staff. John Picher replied that he would try to increase the staff if funding was available. He would like to see 3 staff people at the Fort to collect fees and give tours or perhaps install an "iron ranger." Ms. Percy asked about the number of lifeguards. Brian Murray stated that they would need more lifeguards and that Popham has less lifeguards per area than other places - Reid State Park has 8 guards and Popham has 6 guards. The Popham lifeguards monitor more people per guard than other Parks. John Skroski stated that guards should not have to be taken away from other duties to control traffic and that it is important to keep the staff ratio up or there will be problems.

Leila Percy asked what the saturation point was and what do you do when you reach it? Susan Moreau replied that there was a traffic survey completed and a traffic engineer will help determine that.

Bob Butler mentioned the proposed subdivision of 70 homes and a beach club in Popham (Poliquin's) would add to the heavy 209 traffic headed to the State Park and needed to be evaluated by the Planning Board and DOT. He also stated that bikers are with us now on 209, he passed more than a dozen today, and there is nowhere from them to go.

Selectman Douglass asked what the saturation point of the beach was? John Picher replied that the beach is not a limiting factor. When it is at full capacity you still have room on beach, especially at low tide. The infrastructure, staffing and access to the beach are the problem. He further stated that even if people were bussed in it won't overload the beach. Facilities could be built to accommodate what the beach can handle.

Selectman Perkins asked if DOT has looked at the Route 209 access through Bath because this is part of the whole picture. Susan Moreau said that it could be checked if the Town wished. She further stated that we need to look at the future. DOT has 2, 6 and 20-year plans. If the project starts developing then she will be talking to other departments to help facilitate the project. The project can't be done

all at once – it is 10 to 15 years out.

John Picher stated that he has talked to Randy Dunton, Region Traffic Engineer, who is willing to help out with traffic issues throughout Phippsburg – not only at Popham. He wants to solve problems as we go and look at the future.

Selectman Douglass said that in the past the Town has tried to deal with specific problems at Popham and nothing happened until we got different agencies into a room together. He is glad to see that the representatives came as a group and they may want to add others. Elaine Clark agreed recommending that a steering committee be created consisting of DEP, Maine Historic Preservation Commission and others.

Selectman Douglass stated that he would like to have regular meetings of this committee. He asked if funding might be cut as the committee is working towards a long range plan and it was explained that this was one of the reasons that most of the funding will hopefully come from private and federal funds. However, the State agencies would be there to assist in the planning.

Bob Butler mentioned that the traffic situation and parking has improved significantly thanks to Brian Murray, his staff and John Skroski.

Selectman Douglass stated that although the Park personnel and Chief Skroski have worked well together to handle the present situation - if things change through improvements and traffic increases we will be back to having the same problems.

- Meet with the Assessing Agent to discuss the “Declaration of Certified Ratio.”
Tabled until full Board is present at the next meeting.

3. Discuss the following issues:

- Authorization for a payment of \$8,350.00 for asbestos tile removal and re-carpeting of the school out of the School Capital Improvement Account.

Upon recommendation of the School Board the Selectmen voted (2-0) to appropriate \$8,350.00 out of the School Capital Improvement Account to pay R.J. Enterprises, Inc. for the removal of vinyl asbestos tile and carpeting of the hallway. This decision was made in accordance with Article 31 of the May 2005 Annual Town Meeting and 30-A M.R.S.A. 5802.

- MMA Voting Delegates Credential Form.
No action taken.
- Administrator's vacation on September 23rd and 26th.
Selectmen approved (2-0)

4. Review the following items:

- August Solid Waste Report.
Reviewed. No further action taken.
- Workers Comp dividend payment.
Reviewed. The Town received \$1,296 in dividends from Maine Municipal Association.

5. Discuss attendance at the following meetings, courses, and seminars:

- Chamber of Commerce “After Hours” Cruise.
No one will attend.

- OSHA Training.
A copy was sent to the Fire Chief. Copies will also be sent to Chief Skroski and Lee Rainey (CEO.)

- 6. Miscellaneous
 - **Organizations within the Town will have a Hurricane Katrina benefit dinner to raise funds for the Red Cross on September 21st. Selectmen voted (2-0) not to have a meeting that night.**

 - **The T/A briefed the Selectmen on efforts to locate a tractor for the Transfer Station.**

 - **Curtis Doughty, Road Commissioner, briefed the Selectmen on the Stoneybrook Road construction. There are several spots along the edges of the payment that are breaking away because the backhoe pads were placed there. These sections will be cut out and repaired prior to the final coat of asphalt being laid on Friday. The only question left was the location of the yellow centerline. With the current configuration the centerline appears to hug towards the ditch. The Road Commissioner recommended that it be set over a foot or so. Selectmen recommended that the Road Commissioner contact Crooker and Sons and see if they would comply. Mr. Doughty will also contact a contractor to take care of the miscellaneous tree cutting that has been discussed at prior meetings.**

 - **Selectman Douglass mentioned that someone had sent a bogus Bulletin Board ad to the CATV Committee that was aired. Bill Perkins, Chair of the CATV Committee, mentioned that both Phippsburg and Bath will accept Bulletin Board ads and that ads for the Phippsburg Bulletin Board can be dropped off at the Town Office.**

Adjourned: 8:22 p.m.