

**MINUTES
ROCKINGHAM PLANNING COMMISSION**

**May 12, 2004
North Hampton Town Hall
North Hampton, NH**

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: G. Coppelman (Acting Chairman); L. Smith, R. Day (East Kingston); K. Weyler (Kingston); F. Griffin, G. English (Exeter); B. Dearborn (Greenland); B. Brown (Rye); T. Tocci (Hampton Falls); W. Bambury (Hampton); S. Kroner (North Hampton); J. Payzant (New Castle); S. Perry (Kensington); R. Cooney, B. Ellis (Salem); T. Moore (Plaistow);

GUESTS: Brandon Kernen, NHDES; Sue Foote, Seabrook CC & PB; Dick Dodge, Seabrook; Fran McMahon, Hampton

STAFF: C. Sinnott (Executive Director); G. Greenwood (Assistant Director); A. Pettengill (Business Manager)

I. Welcome/Introductions

Coppelman welcomed everyone in attendance and thanked Kroner and the Town of North Hampton for hosting the meeting.

II. Minutes of April 14, 2004

Payzant moved to approve the Minutes of April 14, 2004 as presented; Ellis seconded. SO VOTED. Day, Cooney, Dearborn abstentions.

III. Communications

Bambury gave a brief update on the Hampton Beach Master Plan. In 2001 the Beach area Master Plan Committee met for the first time and the Planning Board approved the Master Plan a year later. A new Hampton Beach Commission has been formed by the legislature in 2002 to implement one piece of the master plan and work with a consultant. Workshops have been held and many things discussed, including changes to the traffic pattern on the beach. Plans are in place to block off a portion of Route 1A in front of the Casino. Parking facilities are being discussed. Discussion followed on the visioning process.

Sinnott distributed the Alewife Festival card as a reminder to all to attend and he also distributed a new Commissioner list and work program reports. Sinnott noted that he spoke to Sue Foster and Ralph is not doing well and is currently at a hospital in Peabody.

Coppelman invited Kroner to give an update on the "planning landscape" in North Hampton. Kroner stated that he is the Vice Chair on the Planning Board and noted that the Spring has been very busy with subdivisions and proposed new retail and warehouse business and expanding restaurants. A new 68 lot manufactured housing development is proposed with individual septage for each lot using a NHDES approved system called

“clean system”. The Planning Board is also looking at how to deal with change of use issues and working with the RPC Circuit Rider to update the sign ordinance, master plan update, housing and aquifer protection ordinance. Discussion followed on the 68 mobile home park proposal and elderly housing growth.

Payzant noted that Odiorne Science Center is reopening after a million dollar renovation and invited everyone to join the festivities.

Greenwood reminded those present that the Municipal Board Training series is coming up and he noted that the new format needs planning board members to form small teams so it's important to discuss it at your next planning board meeting if you wish to be involved.

Sinnott introduced Chris Cross as the RPC representative on the Advisory Task Force for the Newington to Dover Little Bay Bridge Expansion project. Cross is the Chair of that Task Force and they have recently completed the narrowing of design alternative to three primary design concepts. Cross said his goal was to inform the RPC on the Task Force's progress thus far. Cross began by explaining the process and that the first year has been primarily investigating the sites, hold public meetings, and look at issues residents have expressed. They are also looking at the natural resources, traffic flows, and projected expansion of the traffic based on the MPO traffic model. The second phase has been looking at the different alternatives such as double decker vs. suspension, etc. He noted that the General Sullivan bridge has some historical significance, but it is currently not being used due to structural problems. The Little Bay Bridge has significant underwater structural issues and has site distance problems. He explained roadway problems and design problems. He discussed three options being reviewed: Refurbish the General Sullivan bridge and the Little Bay bridge; or remove General Sullivan bridge and refurbish the Little Bay bridge and add four lanes to it; or tear down both bridges and rebuild an eight lane structure. Cross explained the problems and the benefits of each option. (See presentation slides attached)

English asked if the General Sullivan bridge is considered historic due to it's age or due to the type of bridge it is. Cross explained that it is an integrated truss bridge, one of two built at the time, and considered a revolutionary design for its time. It's been proposed that if the bridge cannot be saved for any use, a small facility be erected detailing the bridge and its architecture with pictures and history of the bridge. Discussion followed regarding recreational walking traffic and bike paths. Cross noted that with the funding available now, a total for all costs involved is assumed to be \$100 to \$110 million, depending on the replacement option chosen and approximately five years until construction begins. Cross briefly explained the roadway approach alternatives under consideration on both the Dover and Newington ends.

IV. Feasibility of Desalination/White Paper, Glenn Greenwood, RPC

Coppelman introduced Glenn Greenwood, Assistant Director, RPC. Greenwood noted that the issue of Desalination has become of great interest as of late due to several factors: the continuous growth in the region; the drought experienced here two years ago; historic summer time stress on the regional water supply; long standing Commissioner interest; and the NH Coastal Program support.

He explained that desalination is the process of removing salt compounds from water to create a product suitable for human consumption. There are both old and new technologies to accomplish this, thermal (distillation) and membrane (reverse osmosis). The membrane technology appears to make the most sense for this region. That technology uses water pressure to filter out salt components creating a potable water product. He reviewed the reasons favoring the use of desalination: groundwater and

surface water are overutilized and stressed in the coastal region, technology has advanced, our region already has some of the necessary infrastructure and we would end up with a high quality end product. It is expensive however, and a large amount of regional cooperation is required. It also has some environmental impacts. A very big positive factor to a regional desalination facility is the ability to co-locate with energy plants and municipal water districts. These facilities keep the processing costs down by using the already warmed water as the desalination sourcewater. It takes less energy to remove the salt compound from warm water. Discussion followed regarding the use of brackish water and the environmental concerns and permitting processes. Dodge stated that the real expense related to this technology is the maintenance of the membranes and he noted that the largest desalination plant is located on the Colorado River. Greenwood noted that smaller plants are much more expensive as a per gallon basis and if you go to a 25 million gallons per day plant with direct seawater, the cost is \$6 per 1000 gallons and brackish water would be as low as \$3.

Greenwood stated that much more research and public outreach needs to occur before a project like this could ever move forward. He expressed concern that creating an unimpeded supply of water would result in wastefulness and would be detrimental to the groundwater sources available now. Cooney explained the SB 162 Study Committee which is charged with developing a master plan in the State. Cooney stated it's still in the information stages and NHDES is helping the Committee and supplying them with data. Discussion followed.

The State Perspective: NHDES Experiences, Brandon Kernen, Hydrogeologist

Coppelman introduced Brandon Kernen from NH Dept of Environmental Services, Water Supply Engineering Bureau. Kernen stated that he is not a specialist in desalination but as the Technical Manager for Groundwater Permitting and Water Conservation, he was involved in setting up the permitting and the regulatory process for regional desalination at DES. He noted that desalination is not a new idea as evidenced by a quote from John F. Kennedy from a brochure made in 1961 "If we could ever competitively, at a cheap rate, get fresh water from saltwater,....(this) would be in the long range interests of humanity which could really dwarf any other scientific accomplishments." He stated that desalting is not a new idea in NH either, as evidenced by the Town of Seabrook and the NH Water Supply and Pollution Control Commission who requested in 1980 that the US Dept of Interior complete a desalting demonstration project in NH because the seacoast area had begun to feel the effect of population expansion in the region being so close to the Boston metropolitan area. They suggested that successful application of desalination techniques in Seabrook would have a far reaching effect for all communities in the coastal area. He discussed SB 162, Water Resource Study Bill to study water resources in the State and consider the use of desalination and future municipal water needs.

Kernen gave an overview of the permitting requirements for desalination in NH. They are based on large groundwater withdrawal regulations and water conservation requirements. These permits cover the extraction, discharge, water quality, air quality, waste management and disposal, and the construction of facilities. He discussed the possibilities of saltwater intrusion and upsetting the wetland resources on the surface. Kernan noted that DES offered Seabrook an alternative to desalination by pursuing advance water treatment to fresh water supplies obtained from sources that did not meet the current well citing requirements. The treatment would cost less and use less energy than treating saltwater and would produce better water quality in a more reliable way.

Discussion followed on the benefits and concerns associated with desalination, regional connections, costs. Foote stated that when Seabrook Watershed Advisory Committee costed out the desal plant proposal, it was estimated the cost to be \$7-9 per 1000 gallons

above what they were currently paying which would be a great conservation effort because no one would pay that price for water. It was concluded to be more cost effective and conservation worthy to create a re-use of the wastewater treatment facility water for industry re-use. Dodge volunteered information pertaining to a wastewater treatment facility in California.

V. Executive Committee Report

- a. Financial Report: No discussion
- b. FY 2005 Budget: *Cooney moved to approve the FY 2005 Budget as recommended by the Executive Committee; Tocci seconded.* Sinnott noted the funding picture is relatively secure and the only question is the Regional Environmental Program funding. This budget does include a bare minimum unobligated funds and the salary line item increase is due to understaffing last year and the replacement of full time staff. It does include not increases for existing staff. Hopefully, if funding improves, salary adjustments will be recommended later in the year. The dues rate remains the same as does the hourly rate. *Chairman Coppelman called the motion: SO VOTED.*
- c. Joint Meeting with MVPC: Sinnott informed the Board that Merrimack Valley Planning Commission would like to meet with this Board for a discussion focused on transportation issues. The best date is Thursday, June 24th.

VI. Report of the Nominating Committee

Coppelman noted that the Nominating Committee met and has proposed a Slate of Officers for FY 05: Chair-Landman; Vice-Stoller; Secretary- Brown; Treasurer- Coppelman; Past Chair-Hastings; At Large Members-Holden, Cooney, Griffin, Olney; At Large Alternates-Kroner, Lovecchio, Ellis, Tocci

Additional nominations will be accepted on the floor of the Annual Meeting and a vote will be taken at the Annual Meeting. Brown noted that the Executive Committee named the Nominating Committee and our bylaws mandate that Committee be five members. This Nominating Committee consisted of only three members, so the Executive Committee will reaffirm and bring it back at the Annual Meeting to acknowledge that error.

VII. Regional Impact Update: Shiller Station Fuel Conversion

Sinnott stated this project is still in the review process. The regional impacts are focused on transportation. Both Portsmouth and Newington are negotiating with PSNH to upgrade Gosling Road and to complete a dedicated right of way through to PSNH Newington Station. Rail transportation has been taken off the table unless the expansion to one more boiler occurs.

VIII. Other Business

- a. Project Updates: Distributed
- b. Annual Meeting: The Old Salt Restaurant in Hampton, June 9th; George Bald, Executive Director, PDA; invitations to go out within the week.
- c. Other

IX. Adjourn

Smith moved to adjourn at 9:50 p.m.; Ellis seconded. SO VOTED.

Respectfully submitted,
Annette L. Pettengill
Recording Secretary