

Transportation Committee Meeting Minutes February 16, 2004

Attending: Don Jones, Lois Kwantz, Marguerite Rafter

Absent: Seaver Leslie, Sean Rafter

Guest: Ryan Thompson, Reporter for Wiscasset Newspaper

Chairman Don Jones called the meeting to order at 7 PM. After reviewing the minutes of the January 19, 2004 meeting, they were voted to be accepted as written, 3-0. Don requested that Lois forward both the December minutes along with the January minutes via email so that he can file them with the town office.

Don reported that, at the selectmen's meeting following the January 26th workshop with members of the TC, the board voted to endorse the TC's recommendations regarding bypass interchanges at the proposed bypass crossings on both Rtes. 27 and 218. The committee had recommended that there be full interchanges in both places. The selectmen have also voted to have another non-binding referendum concerning the bypass. Don has seen a preliminary draft of the questions; at this point there are four, one of which includes a no-build option. Members of the committee expressed reservations about including "no-build" since it continues to offer false hope that no-build might still be an option. The committee feels that the only choices are the two left on the table. The referendum vote is scheduled for Friday, March 19th with the town meeting to be held the next day, Saturday, March 20th. Marguerite expressed concern about the validity of the vote results if the referendum vote is the ONLY item to be voted upon that day. Don said he would find out if there were other items for vote; if there are not, Lois suggested that perhaps the selectmen might consider moving the vote to the beginning of the town meeting, using the voting machine. That way, there might also be a larger turn out for the town meeting itself. The committee agreed that Don should use his judgment regarding any suggestions to the selectmen about the bypass referendum. Don suggested that individual members of the TC might write letters to the editor in the local weeklies expressing their opinions about the referendum, especially about the unlikelihood of a no-build option being an MDOT solution.

Andrew Gilmore was unable to be with us to discuss the Community Transportation Improvements packet which has come from MDOT. This folder contains, among other things, proposed road improvements that might be included in the six year highway development programs for 2006/7 as well as offerings of projects with matching grants available that might be used by Wiscasset. Wiscasset has the opportunity to comment on proposed highway projects as well as make suggestions for other projects. There are six sections to the packet:

Section 1: Highway Improvement Projects

This included a map of Lincoln County and surrounding areas with red lines indicating "candidate" projects for the 2006/7 highway improvement program. There were no red lines within Wiscasset. Of the projects proposed within our area, the committee felt the improvement to business Rte 1 in Damariscotta was the only project that might be beneficial to residents of Wiscasset. Work on Rte. 209, Bath to Phippsburg, and work on Rte. 32 from New Harbor through Round Pond to Bremen didn't seem to have much benefit for the community of Wiscasset.

Section 2: Local Highway Improvement Projects

This section allows the community to identify other locations/projects within the community but NOT indicated on the larger area wide map. These projects can include highway reconstruction, resurfacing, safety issues, signal upgrades, traffic improvement, etc. Projects in this section may require matching community money. Don and Andrew Gilmore had discussed two possibilities: 1. A traffic signal at US1/Rte. 27, and 2. Relocation of Rte. 144 to allow for expansion of the Wiscasset airport. Other suggestions from members of the TC included 3. Straightening out the intersection alignment at Lee St. and Bradford Rd., 4. Making lower Flood Ave. a right angle turn/intersection onto Rte. 1, and 5. Further treatment of the intersection at the Yellow Front mini-mall/future Shaws mall development for safety reasons. Of the five, the TC voted the traffic light at US1/Rte. 27 as the top priority.

Section 3: Rural Road Initiative

This section allows for suggested improvements to minor collector roads. Within the hierarchy of road designations, these are roads that are often overlooked within a community because they are not a principal or secondary arterial or even a major collector road like Rtes. 218 or 144. A minor collector road moves people from one community to another, or to a major arterial. Don will see about getting a list of roads designated by MDOT as minor collector roads within Wiscasset in order to see if there are any that we might apply for grant money in order to do improvements. There is a requirement of 33% matching money from the local community.

Section 4: Transportation Enhancement Program

This section is supposed to provide grant money for projects that relate directly to transportation improvement that would enhance the liveability of the community. Categories include things like scenic beautification, run-off problems, bicycle and pedestrian safety programs, scenic, landscaping or historic projects. The committee was not sure how the suggested types of projects related to "transportation improvements". A 20% match of money from the community is required for these projects.

Section 5: Passenger/Freight Transportation Improvement

This section relates to moving commuters and freight. Airport and bus systems require matching funds from the community involved. The TC suggested that the building of the commuter and "in-town" railway stations might fall under this section.

Section 6: Small Harbor Improvement Program/Boating Infrastructure

This section is dedicated to to communities with a coastal marine infrastructure, which the town of Wiscasset certainly falls into. The TC suggested that a ferry terminal/pier adjacent to the proposed intown railway station (north of the bridge) might be a project that would be appropriate. We also suggested that this section and the application should be forwarded to Bill Sutter, the harbor master, for his suggestions.

There was no new business to be discussed. The attending members agreed upon Monday, March 15th, same time, same place for our next meeting. We adjourned at 8:20 PM on a 3-0 vote.

Submitted by Lois Kwantz, Secretary