

Traffic Safety Advisory Committee
August 13, 2012
Minutes

Present: Gil Archambault – Chairman
 Ricky Riendeau – Vice Chairman
 Chief Michael Viola
 Richard Tortorelli
 Gary Daniels – Board of Selectmen representative
 Bill Parker
 Dave Wheeler
 Ken Clinton, Meridian Land Services

Secretary: Mindy Lavallee, Recording Secretary

1. *Roll Call vote required by the BOS.*

NEW BUSINESS:

2. *Traffic impacts in relation to proposed senior housing development at North River Rd. and Mont Vernon Rd.*

B. Parker explained that Ken Clinton, Chief of Survey at Meridian Land Services, asked to meet with the Traffic Safety Committee. Ken is representing Ducal Development, who has an application before the Zoning Board for a special exception for 24 units of 55+ housing. The proposed housing will be located at North River Rd and Mont Vernon Rd at the “V” where the Hutchinson Home is. The application was tabled on July 19th so that Ducal Development could provide more information, including input from the TSC.

K. Clinton said that the ZBA requested that he come to the TSC to get feedback on the concept plan for the development. The paramount concern is how residents will get in and out of the property. Mont Vernon Rd, also known as Route 13, and North River Rd, are state maintained; DOT has the jurisdiction on the roads. He said he met with Scott Looney, a representative from NHDOT District 5, on the site. It was determined that three access points were allowable on Mont Vernon Rd as well as on North River Rd, granted that there was 400 feet of sight distance at each access. The standard is that each access point has 400 feet of sight distance. K. Clinton referenced the conceptual design presented to the ZBA and sent to Scott Looney, which displays the five proposed access points, labeled A, B, C, D and E. He said that point “A”, located on Mont Vernon Rd, represented the primary access and most likely exceeds the required 400 feet of sight distance. He said he did not have a particular concern about that location. The second point, “B”, is a concern of the ZBA and it might be removed from the plan. The ZBA stated that the Ordinance allows for two points of access, one of which might be an emergency access point. At this point in the concept there are three access points, as it might provide for a better flow-through from an emergency standpoint. The developers would have to be granted a variance from the ZBA to keep the third access point. The third access point, “C”, on North River Rd, is proposed as a gated exit to be used only in emergencies. There is currently a paved apron in this location as well as a Fairpoint utility cabinet. It is a logical spot because it has been used to access the property in the

past. However, a significant amount of brush and trees would need to be cut down in order to obtain the necessary 400 feet of sight distance. The neighbors have been agreeable to the possibility of granting an easement to maintain this area. Sight distance is also compromised because the area is located on the inside of a curve, which is why it seems to make the most sense to keep it as an emergency exit and not a main point of access. It was suggested to Scott Looney that this spot should be used as an allowable access point even if there is not 400 feet of sight distance. Scott Looney has not weighed in on this proposal, as he is waiting for a more formal application from Meridian. If it is decided that the 400 feet will not be required, not as much brush will need to be removed. Otherwise, the easement will need to be arranged. The fourth point, "D", on North River Rd, is a proposed crosswalk. It is located somewhat near the stop line for traffic and in an easier area of viewing. It provides connectivity to the downtown area. He said he feels this is the safest spot, but DOT has not weighed in on this location yet. The last point, "E" is the intersection of North River Rd and Mont Vernon Rd. He said a change that might work here is realigning the roads into a "T" intersection. DOT indicated that there are no near-term plans to fund this project, but Meridian has factored in an easement that would give the State the necessary land to reconstruct the intersection, should they choose to do so in the future. He said that the four main points he would like the TSC to look at are the two driveways ("A" and "B"), one of which is possibly being removed, the gated emergency access ("C") and the crosswalk ("D").

D. Tortorelli asked if the plan had been approved by the Fire Department.

K. Clinton said no.

D. Tortorelli said the Fire Department would probably be concerned about eliminating point "B". He wanted to know how Fire Trucks would back out of the property with only the one entrance.

K. Clinton said from an engineering standpoint, it does make sense to have an entrance "B".

R. Riendeau asked if it would be possible to open up the area where the gated exit is located, so that the fire trucks would have a place to turn around in.

K. Clinton said one concern about opening up this area is that it could be used as a cut-through, which is not desirable.

B. Parker said that rather than eliminate access point "B", it could be made into another emergency only access.

D. Wheeler asked why it was being proposed to change the intersection to a "T".

K. Clinton clarified that Meridian would not make this change; it would be up to DOT. Meridian would simply provide the land that would be needed if this is ever pursued by DOT.

D. Wheeler asked, should DOT decide to move forward with changing the layout of the intersection, if they would put a left turn lane and if there would be a stop sign. He said he would rather not see a stop sign here.

K. Clinton said it is a possibility.

D. Wheeler said he is also concerned about the location of the crosswalk, as he feels it is hazardous due to the traffic heading to and from the transfer station. The crosswalk should be down at the other end of the road.

R. Riendeau agreed that it might help to push the crosswalk back a little.

G. Daniels commented that it should be farther down so that traffic doesn't back up into the intersection in the event of a vehicle stopping to let someone cross the road.

G. Archambault asked how wide the lanes were in the property and if they would accommodate fire trucks.

K. Clinton said the proposed lanes are twenty feet wide.

D. Tortorelli said this would provide enough room for the trucks to get into the property, just not turn around.

M. Viola asked if the loop, from “A” to “B”, could function as a one-way road.

K. Clinton said that idea has been discussed.

D. Wheeler asked if the loop was one-way, would it be a right turn only coming out of the second driveway, so that vehicles would be prohibited from crossing Route 13.

K. Clinton said that if the second driveway was a right-turn only, than the loop would have to function as a two-way drive; otherwise, vehicles would be stuck with the one turning option.

D. Wheeler asked if the gated entrance “C” could instead be used as the main point of access.

K. Clinton said that is a possibility if enough trees and brush can be cut to obtain 400 feet of sight distance.

R. Riendeau said the gate should then be moved to the other side.

D. Wheeler said he does not understand why there have to be two access points on Route 13.

K. Clinton said the two proposed access points on Mont Vernon Rd/Route 13 developed from an emergency access standpoint.

B. Parker said the only problem with having the main access at North River Rd is that people will use the driveway as a cut-through.

D. Wheeler asked if speed bumps would prevent this.

R. Riendeau said it would slow traffic down but vehicles would still cut through. At least one access point definitely needs to be gated.

K. Clinton asked if both access points on Mont Vernon Rd should be gated, if the main access point was to be at North River Rd.

G. Archambault said “No Entry”/“Exit Only” signage could be put up in lieu of gates.

K. Clinton commented that in that case, it would just become an enforcement issue if any problems arose. However, the ZBA might still not be happy about having 3 access points.

G. Archambault said a flashing light at the intersection might be necessary.

D. Wheeler said neighbors in that area might not want the extra lighting reflecting in their homes.

G. Daniels asked what the traffic accident history is at that intersection. It was suggested that Chief Viola look into this.

D. Wheeler asked if there had been any proposals to reduce the speed limit in this area.

R. Riendeau noted that the current speed limit is 30mph.

K. Clinton said that was one idea proposed to the ZBA. However, the State/DOT would probably feel that that the traffic volume will not increase enough to warrant a speed reduction. A traffic study was conducted near the Belmont property, a 12-unit senior housing development on Amherst St. They were expecting about 166 vehicles per day to transition in or out. According to the most recent data from Southern NH Regional Planning, even at 166 cars per day, traffic volume has dropped on these roads 14% since 2004. It is not clear why, but it seems people have different commuting patterns. He added that regarding the crosswalk location, he agrees with the comments that traffic may become backed up here, especially considering the traffic from the transfer station. It is important to have the crosswalk because it gives residents a known, designated place to cross. It does make sense to put it farther up North river Rd, possibly near the nursing center across the street from the property. The crosswalk is still subject to DOT approval. He said regarding turning radiuses for fire trucks and emergency vehicles, it is often difficult to accommodate these concerns when struggling with other aspects of the Ordinance. However, it seems important that this issue is addressed. He said one possibility that has been discussed is rearranging some of the housing units to accommodate a larger turnaround area. He asked if there were any further questions or concerns.

G. Archambault asked if the TSC should meet once more to discuss these issues.

K. Clinton said the ZBA meeting is on September 20th. Once the Planning Board process begins sometime in October, it will probably be necessary for TSC to meet on this again. G. Daniels asked how much say the Planning Board has in terms of access when dealing with State roads such as this.

B. Parker said that the State has ultimate jurisdiction and this will control how the Planning Board makes their decisions.

G. Daniels asked how much responsibility DOT has if there is an issue with the intersection in the future.

K. Clinton said ultimately, DOT would be responsible to make any necessary fixes. He added that typically, DOT is not contacted until later in the design process. They were able to provide some input early in this case, but now they are looking for a formal application. He said he will bring everyone's comments to DOT.

B. Parker said in summary, "A" would be a full turning movement, "B" would be an exit only, and "C" would be an emergency exit only.

K. Clinton reiterated that there is a desire for some sort of restriction at access point "B". Also, his preference is to have "C" gated.

D. Wheeler said he cannot agree with the conceptual plan. He thinks the main point of access to the property should be on North River Rd. He does not want to see traffic trying to cross Route 13 and causing backup. He said he wouldn't mind people entering the property at the two entrances on Route 13 if they are travelling southbound; a turning lane could even be put in here. Fire trucks and emergency vehicles could still access the property at these points, regardless if they are designated as exit only and entrance only.

K. Clinton explained that from an engineering standpoint, using access point "A" as the main entrance is the safest option. Also, even if DOT grants these access points, it does not mean the Town has to approve them. He said at this point, he will need to finalize the design enough so that it is suitable for the State. He said he will list the concerns that were brought up and see what DOT has to say. He will provide a copy of any documents given to DOT to Bill Parker so he can share with the TSC.

B. Parker said he would also inform the ZBA with a memo prior to the meeting on the 20th.

6. *Approval of Minutes from April 23, 2012*

G. Archambault asked for a motion to approve the minutes.

R. Riendeau made a motion. D. Tortorelli seconded. All were in favor.

Minutes from the April 23, 2012 meeting were approved.

Meeting adjourned at 5pm.