

Calais Roads Advisory Committee Meeting  
Thursday, September 12, 2013  
Calais Town Office 7:00 pm to 10:15 pm  
APPROVED Oct 3, 2013

Committee members present (clockwise around the table from the Chair): J.C. Myers (Chair), Peter Harvey, Conrad Smith, Stephanie Kaplan, and Barbara Weedon.

Absent: Doug Lilley, Craig Line, and Trey Martin.

Also attending: Scott Bassage

**[7:05 pm][1 minute]** Call to order; decide whether to accept minutes for 8/29/13 meeting

- A motion to approve the minutes as written. They were approved 4-0-1 (Barbara abstained).

**[7:06 pm][9 minutes]** Public input from any attending non-CRAC [Calais Roads Advisory Committee] members of the community.

- Scott spoke about the recent job descriptions for: Town of Calais Highway Operations Manager, Road Commissioner, Road Crew Worker (Levels 1, 2, & 3). Alfred has been reappointed to the position of Road Commissioner. The Selectboard is looking for a part time Calais Highway Operations Manager. [The job descriptions are available from the Town Clerk.]
- [Both this and previous Road Committees have talked about advising the Selectboard to hire a part time Operations Manager.]

**[7:12 pm][12 minutes]**-Discussion of Road Projects and State Funded Projects under way and planned. Reports from CRAC members who have attended SB meetings.

- [7:12 pm] Stephanie spoke about her meeting with Alfred and Denise on Jack Hill Rd today.
- [7:15 pm] JC told us that he has been looking for roads management software that he feels would support our road management goals. JC wants to spend part of a day with Alfred to better understand his organizing systems.
  - Conrad suggested he look into the NEMERIC packages
  - Peter suggested that he contact Dan Currier at the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission
- [7:23 pm] Peter noted that all the new job descriptions supported continued training needed for advancement.

-Reports from individual committees and feedback from whole group on progress.

- **[7:25 pm][14 minutes]** Singleton Road project, Better Back Roads Grant. The total cost of the rebuilding and stone lined ditching [from the sharp turn where Don Singleton Senior lived to MacKay's] project is \$12,486. The Better Back Roads grant is for \$9,998. The Town's share would be \$2,497 plus the physical work. The Selectboard agreed at

their last meeting, Monday 9/9/13, to hold off on accepting the grant until this Roads Advisory Committee had a chance to weigh in on this project.

- Conrad said that it doesn't fit the standards we are developing.
  - Scott said there is no room for flexibility in the rebuilding under the grant.
  - Conrad said the issues are the stone lined ditches and cutting down the large black locus tree at the upper bend.
  - Peter told the Board that there is already a large grass lined ditch on the north side of the road, but there is a berm, created by the road grader over the years, that prevents water from sheeting off into that ditch and a berm on the south edge keeping the water in the roadway that is washing out the edge of the road. Either take out the berm, or add gravel to the road to bring it up higher than the berm so that water can flow off the road.
  - Conrad said it appears that it would be inconsistent with the standards that the subcommittee is proposing. He offered to study the proposal and list the ways that this project does/does not comply with the standards the subcommittee is proposing.
  - Scott told the committee "But it's the first ever packet describing a project. This is an improvement. Instead of having nothing, at least we have this. I see, in my best future, that every time that Alfred proposes a project, we'd have a packet. And we could take it to an open meeting...look at and help it get better." Later Scott told the meeting that these big projects, such as Sadie Foss Rd, have gone ahead without sufficient review by the select board because they always come in, last minute, and say that you have to sign it because it is due tomorrow.
  - JC summarized that the Town should not accept money to do something that does not fit with the work that we are doing. "Basically we are giving up the money that it would take for us to do what we don't want to do."
  - The representative told the Selectboard that they would hold the grant till Nov. 1<sup>st</sup>.
  - Peter told the committee – "Having dealt with grants before, if you don't use the grant, they look bad and they've got to do something with the money."
  - [There was some confusion between the Better Back Roads Program and the Vermont Local Roads Program.]
    - ["The Vermont Better Backroads Program's goal is to promote the use of erosion control and maintenance techniques that save money while protecting and enhancing Vermont's lakes and streams. Grant funds are provided by the VT Agency of Transportation (VTrans and the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (ANR)."  
<http://vtransengineering.vermont.gov/sections/environmental/betterbackroads>
    - [The Local Roads Program is "sponsored by the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Vermont Local Roads Program provides information, training, and technical assistance to cities, towns and villages in Vermont." It conducts training for town road crews and is based at Saint Michael's College. <http://www.vermontlocalroads.org/about%20us.html>]
- [7:35] Peter asked if our budget got brought up at the Selectboard Meeting. Scott said no.
  - [7:38][38 minutes] Road Inventory Subcommittee report Conrad & Barbara

- What data to gather and how to gather it has proven difficult to settle on.
- Conrad – collector roads are probably going to be based on the traffic density that we want to have, not what they currently have. Make roads attractive and comfortable to different groups of people, or for different uses (going to work or going for a slow ride) through: speed limits (some higher, some lower), maintenance (some graded more often, other less often), snow plowing (some plowed earlier and more often than others), road width (some wider, some narrower), etc.
- Scott talked about a process that he & Peter observed in Middlesex abt 10 years ago where a photographer took a lot of pictures of the roads in Middlesex that were later projected at a large public meeting. The crowd of residents then ranked each of the pictures of the roads by the gut feelings of the residents. “That got buy in from the whole town.” That directed the Middlesex Selectboard and Road Crew about what the taxpayers wanted their roads to be like. There was some discussion about whether we should hold a similar meeting but no decision about this was made.
- Peter later added, “We often like things without understanding why we like them. And they are valuable without having to understanding all of that.” “Extremes are much easier to agree on. Let’s say, this is a group of roads we don’t want to touch, leave them alone. This is a group of roads we see real troubles with, then work towards the middle from both ends, and do it slowly over time.” “We are going to have to start with the collectors.”
- Conrad asked what are the sections of roads we don’t want to touch... and what are the sections that are troublesome? We could drive all 80 miles and do that. What are the sections of road that are, in our opinion, wonderful? What are the sections that are potentially wonderful? And, while we’re doing it, say – here’s a problem.
- Peter will look at the traffic studies after he gets caught up with the roads reading that he is already doing for Standards Subcommittee.
- Conrad will re-look at the Road Inventory and ask if we can drive the roads up into sections:
  - Wonderful
  - Potentially Wonderful
  - Problem Spots.
- Next year we can identify specific roads and what should be done to them as a work plan.
- [8:17 pm][39 minutes] Road Standards Subcommittee
  - Conrad reported Version F of the proposed Standards
  - Gravel road classification widths:
  - Peter said that if you have a grassed gravel verge cars can safely drive off the traveled portion of the gravel and onto the shoulder when it is necessary, without falling into a ditch.
  - Speed limits:
    - paved road 50 mph (current Country Rd speed limit)
    - rural collector class 3 gravel roads not to exceed 35 mph (Peter and Conrad think this should be 40 mph, Stephanie thinks 35 is better)

- very low traffic class 3 gravel roads not to exceed 30 mph
  - even less traffic class 4 gravel roads not to exceed 20 mph
- Conrad asked - should collector roads be 40 mph or 30 mph? Barbara said “I don’t think it’s the speed that people care about so much as being able to go on a road that they’re pretty much guaranteed that it’s well maintained. So it’s not getting there faster, its there with more comfort and their car in good shape. At 35 you can do it.”
- Peter said that he doesn’t think speed limits work. People drive at the speed that is comfortable for them, [often disregarding conditions]. But we can offer a selection of types of roads that give people a choice between faster, smoother roads, and slower, narrower, gentler roads. People will choose what best suits their purpose. Conrad & Peter thought collectors to the paved roads [Rt 14 and the County Rd] should be the fastest roads, 40 mph. Stephanie & Barbara & J.C. thought those speed limits should not be that fast.
- Snow plowing hasn’t yet been included in the standards. Doug has said that snow plowing also plows dirt and widens the roads without people realizing it. Scott interjected, “we should stop buying bigger equipment.
- Peter told about how Doug took Scott and him up to look at Stannard Mtn Rd. He said, watch this. He drove down into the ditch and back up on the road again, in rear wheel two-wheel-drive. I think Alfred is getting away from these “U” shaped ditches with a cliff on the edge of the road...you shouldn’t have to worry about driving off the edge of the road and wrecking your car.
- Scott reminded us that the “biggest investment we have in town is our roads... That’s a 100 million dollar investment. It would cost 100 million dollars to recreate those, ... or maybe more”
- Conrad - Ditches that are functioning don’t need to be cleaned out. Supposed to solve problems, not rebuild roads.
- JC – “Is there language in here about tree roots? And damaging trees?”
- Peter – “What I’ve been reading about is that a young tree is very resilient. You can damage it and it will recover. An old tree doesn’t recover...When you damage roots on an old tree, you are really just killing it.”
- [1:30] Short discussion about the differences between stone lined and grass lined ditches.
- Peter said that for \$800,000 a year, we ought to get what we want.
- Conrad – page 5, 2<sup>nd</sup> bullet it’s a new concept. If there are berms on the side of the road and you can’t get rid of them easily, you’ve got to raise the road so that water will sheet off it and not run down the side of the road eroding it.
- Conrad – Use guard rails sparingly.
- Stephanie talked about the Culverts and Bridges section of the Roads Standards. Both the Hydraulics Manual and the Stream Alterations Manual are in the process of being amended, so there is a legal question. Can a Town adopt a standard that is not yet in effect? And that needs to be found out. Trey is looking into that. “... we need to tell the Selectboard what their possibilities are and what the consequences are of the different possibilities. I think we are almost there.” (Conrad has been reading the 318 page Hydraulic Manual.)

- Stephanie asked all to read and email us feedback
  - Stephanie & Conrad noted the Community Notice and Involvement section at the top of the last page. More detail needs to be developed at some point.
  - Scott – We’re good until 2014 as far as AOT is concerned.
  - Conrad – The only thing we need to do for FEMA is that one section [Culverts and Bridges].
  - Scott reminded us that we need to talk with Tom Anderson, AOT
  - JC How is the manager going to take this and use it? It’s the assumption that we are going to have a 5 year plan now and not just do things spontaneously, that we are going to have a list of projects for the next 5 years, long term capital work, different from maintenance which is ongoing.
  - Peter – We need to define the difference between maintenance and reconstruction.
- Discussion of format for final report from Committee: what will it contain? How will it be organized? How will the Town/SB use the report?
- JC felt that this was covered in the previous discussion.

-[8:55 pm][3 minutes] Other business.

- Stephanie – the VTrans Transportation Alternatives Program Grant application that Donna emailed to us 9/10/13. We might be able to get a grant but it’s a lot of work and who’s going to spend the time - “I don’t want to do it.”
- Donna left 3 Vermont Better Backroads Pocket Guides out on the table for us.

-[8:58 pm][3 minutes] Schedule next meeting, review whether 5 topics need expansion (or contraction), next steps related to 5 topics and adjourn.

- Set the next meeting for Thursday Oct 3, 8:00 pm @ the Town Office.
- Peter handed out copies of “Clear field of view at different speeds” from Complete Streets, a guide for Vermont communities, p. 15
- Stephanie still needs to find out if calcium chloride is harmful to water quality
- Peter is still waiting to hear back from VTrans about planting trees in the right of way

[9:00 pm] Adjourned