

**MEETING MINUTES**  
**SPECIAL MEETING OF**  
**THE HOPEWELL TOWNSHIP**  
**HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION**  
**WEDNESDAY September 9, 2009**

A regular meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission was held at the Municipal Building on Tuesday September 15, 2009 in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act. Chair Hayden called the meeting to order at 7:37 pm.

Commission members present: Betsy Ackerman, David Blackwell, Pam Crabtree (7:55), Max Hayden, Erika Kotite, Moira Lawrence (7:40) & Phil Robbins.

Township Committee: Mayor Sandom

Township Administration: Paul Pogorzelski, Administrator/Engineer & Robert Miller, Zoning Officer

County Representatives: Greg Sandusky, Mercer County Engineer

Recording Secretary: Deborah Rishko

***Jacobs Creek Bridge***

Chairman Hayden introduced the HPC commissioners and the Hopewell Township staff in attendance. He gave a brief history and listed the goals and accomplishments of the Hopewell Township HPC. He added that the goal of the evening's meeting was to make a recommendation for the type bridge to replace the historic iron truss bridge over Jacobs Creek. He explained that the Jacobs Creek Bridge Task Force had met over the course of several months and had come up with 12 different options to resolve the issue of whether to build a new bridge or restructure the existing bridge. Among the options was a "slice and dice" alternative that would involve splitting the existing bridge in order to widen it and reinforce the members. The HPC was originally in favor of that option but the presentation by Keller and Kirkpatrick that explained all the options had made them realize that the existing bridge would be drastically altered and signing off on that option would not be in keeping with the basic tenets of preservation. He explained that it was also the understanding of the HPC that the State Historic Preservation Office was in favor of relocating the bridge for use in a local park for foot traffic only. With those things in mind and the need for a safer bridge the HPC had supported the County in their decision to replace and relocate the existing bridge.

**Mr. Sandusky** explained that a truss bridge would be would be a prefab structure with no cross top and would be restricted in overall length and width. He stated that he understood that one of the complaints about the bridge was that there needed to be a left turning lane and that it would not be possible with that type of replacement bridge. He added that a steel stringer bridge would have no length or width constraints and that it can have a stone face and stone abutments. He said that type of bridge could might also blend into the environment.

**Mr. Hayden** mentioned that the new bridge on Rt. 654 was somewhat uninspired. He explained that Mr. Robbins and Mr. Miller had scouted the area for different alternatives and that there were some interesting options in Somerset County.

**Ms. Ackerman** asked if the roadway alignment had been definitively decided.

**Mr. Sandusky** said that it had and that it was kept to a fairly tight radius to keep a 35 mph speed limit.

**Ms. Ackerman** asked about the length of the bridge.

**Mr. Sandusky** said that it would be approximately 90 feet long. He then displayed photos of prefab truss bridges and the replacement bridge over Rosedale Road in Princeton. He added that the county had won an award for repair on a Quaker Road culvert.

**Ms. Kotite** asked if historic value were not a factor would the slice and dice option be viable?

**Mr. Sandusky** stated that the bridge over Rosedale Road was not considered an historic structure and it was replaced.

**Mr. Hayden** mentioned that members of the audience were holding signs that made mention of Washington's Victory Trail.

**Mr. Sandusky** said he was not concerned with the trail but with the safety of the bridge.

**Ms. Kotite** said that the character of the entire area is what is at stake not just the bridge.

**Mr. Blackwell** asked about the capacity of the bridge noting that at one point in time a reduced capacity was discussed.

**Mr. Sandusky** said that a new bridge would have to have a capacity of 40 tons because that is the current standard, if the capacity was lower then it would be a functionally obsolete structure from the start. He said that the county is seeking to have a reduced 4 ton limit from trucks from I-95 to Washington Crossing Pennington Road. He added that at the township committee meeting on 9-8-09 a resolution was introduced to convey control of Rt. 579 from Harbourton Woodsville Road to 1000 ft north of Harbourton Mt. Airy Road and that the county was also working on lowering the speed limit in front of Bear Tavern Elementary school during school hours, getting rid of the passing zone in front of the school and other traffic calming measures. He then asked if the HPC intended to decide on the type of replacement bridge.

**Mr. Pogorzelski** explained that the county needed the guidance of the HPC so that they can hire design professionals for the bridge replacement.

**Ms. Sandom** added that there have been several meetings regarding the bridge and that the left turn lane is an important factor in determining the type of replacement structure.

Mr. Hayden invited the public to comment.

**Beth Kerr** of 1139 Bear Tavern Road expressed dissatisfaction about the decision to replace the bridge despite the public opposition to the plan and felt that it was an example of taxation without representation. She recommended that the bridge be repaired and remain in the same location with minimal disturbance to the area given its historic value.

**Mary Jane Cooper** of 50 Maddock Road expressed concern that the HPC was not given all the information that is available about how to save the existing structure. She asked if Mayor Sandom supported more transparency.

**Ms. Sandom** stated that she requested that the county give as much information as possible.

**Ms Cooper** stated that the bridge is not needed for fire trucks and buses and that she believed that the bridge could be reinforced and remain in place without slicing and dicing. She suggested that if the HPC had the full report and studied it they may agree. She mentioned there have been many accidents and that she thinks the number will

increase with a bigger bridge and increased speeds. She said that the existing bridge has done a good job of traffic calming for all these years.

**Mr. Hayden** said that the HPC did have access to the report and that there has been transparency.

**Mr. Sandusky** stated that there was a presentation in February of 2007 by Keller & Kirkpatrick in which the full report was explained to the HPC.

**Ms. Ackerman** agreed that there was a lengthy presentation and that after the presentation the commissioners realized that in order to comply with the minimum standards the bridge would have to be drastically altered.

**Dan Martin** of 34 Maddock Road said that he would like to have access to the April 2009 report and wanted to know if the HPC was able to see it.

**Mr. Hayden** said that the presentation to the HPC was exhaustive.

**Mr. Martin** asked that the HPC withhold their decision until the report is made available.

**Mr. Sandusky** stated that the recommendation of the task force was based on a comprehensive presentation.

**Don Timbie** of 22 Forrest Blend mentioned option 5c in the engineer's report.

**Mr. Martin** asked if a new structure would have a 15 ton capacity.

**Mr. Sandusky** said no, not a new structure.

**Mr. Martin** asked about the solution used in Califon.

**Mr. Sandusky** said that if the existing structure is upgraded it would have a 15 ton capacity but a new structure would have to have a greater capacity based on current standards since state money is funding the project.

**Mr. Martin** asked what would happen if private funds were used.

**Mr. Sandusky** said he would recommend against it.

**John Hansbury** of 1216 Bear Tavern Road explained that the Washington Crossing Bridge and the Calhoun Street Bridge both have lower sufficiency ratings than the Bear Tavern Bridge. He asked that the HPC not decide on a new bridge and revisit options to keep the bridge in place. He said that if the bridge was not safe it would be closed.

Richard Patterson of Hamilton stated that he had participated in the research that created the maps for Washington's Victory Trail and explained that of the 30 miles of trail only the 750 feet surrounding Jacobs Creek remains the way it looked when Washington's troops passed. He mentioned David Hackett Fisher's award winning book Washington's Crossing and the uniqueness of the area.

**Mr. Hayden** asked how the bridge coexists with the trail.

**Mr. Patterson** said that the trail has been determined to be within 10 feet of the marked route along the roadway/bridge.

**Kim Robinson** of 1568 Harbourton Rocktown Road read a letter from committeeman Michael Markulec urging the HPC to postpone their decision because of a lack of transparency and due diligence. She also asked that the HPC view the 2009 report and not assume that it is one and the same that they were presented with in 2007. She requested that alternative # 2 specifically be reviewed.

**Mr. Hayden** said that the HPC's original recommendation was to restore the bridge in place but the option in the county's report was not accepted by SHPO.

**Ms. Robinson** asked why the HPC did not fight harder and stated that the job of the HPC is to preserve.

**Mr. Hayden** stated that the HPC has fought many preservation fights and ultimately

decided that the enhancements needed would destroy the historic integrity of the bridge. **Ashley Kerr** of 1132 Bear Tavern Road stated that the bridge has not been designated and has only been deemed eligible.

**Beth Kerr** said she was concerned that the citizens are being deceived about the safety of the bridge and wants future generations to enjoy it.

**Ms. Ackerman** stated that the bridge did not exist when the troops crossed the creek and that the HPC was not given an SOI compliant option.

**Ms. Crabtree** stated that she was not sure if the option to upgrade the bridge to 15 ton capacity was SOI compliant but that the HPC had listed the bridge because of the building technology of that type of bridge.

**Ms. Cooper** reiterated that there are a lot of accidents.

**Mr. Hayden** explained that the commission was aware of the safety concerns of those that reside in the vicinity of the bridge and related some of his own experiences with traffic issues in the Mt. Rose area. He said that the commissioners had seen evidence of decay on the existing bridge and felt that once SHPO had ruled out strengthening the bridge in place it was out of their hands.

**Ms. Cooper** stated that the new alignment will offer a shortcut and gas savings to trucks.

**Rollin Lafrance** of 10 Lupine Lane stated that he has a friend who is a highly accomplished engineer and that he would like for him to be able to look at the report to see if the bridge can be saved. He said he felt that there may be some leeway with the 15 ton capacity.

**Don Kramer** of 12 Maddock Road stated that it has taken the opposition to the bridge replacement to get long overdue changes to the speed issues and passing zone in front of the elementary school. He asked Mr. Sandusky about maintenance on the current bridge and expressed concern that it will not withstand the duration of the new bridge replacement project without further maintenance.

**Mr. Sandusky** stated that inspection reports are done annually for the bridge and that there is one repair crew for over 600 bridges. He said that repairs are prioritized based on need and that the Bear Tavern bridge's previous report deemed that the bridge is still safe.

**Mr. Kramer** asked if the Army Corps of Engineers did a report.

**Mr. Pogorzelski** said they did not.

**Mr. Sandusky** said that the DOT has not yet seen the 2009 report and if states that maintenance is required then it will be done.

**Mr. Kramer** asked about the stone wall that has been damaged over the years.

**Mr. Sandusky** said that the wall will most likely be repaired and referenced the job the county did in Princeton on Quaker Road.

**Mr. Kramer** said that it is important for the public to see the reports done on the bridge.

**Mr. Sandusky** said that the reports are not available through an OPRA request.

**Jane Martin** of 34 Maddock Road stated that two petitions in favor of saving the existing bridge have been signed with a total of 344 signatures.

**Ashley Kerr** of 1132 Bear Tavern road stated that the bridge is not on the state register but was deemed eligible in 1991 and that she believes because of this the bridge can legally be altered in place instead of removed.

**Lena O'Brien** of 1585 Harbourton Rocktown Road recommended that the commissioners review other alternatives to replacing the bridge.

**Mr. Blackwell** stated that he is concerned about some of the information Mr. Patterson brought forth about the victory trail and mentioned that not only was the bridge designated as a local historic site but some boundary around it. He said he would like to look into identifying site as a revolutionary war site and recommended postponing a decision about the bridge. Mr. Robbins, Ms. Crabtree, Ms. Ackerman and Ms. Kotite agreed with the postponement.

**Ms. Crabtree** stated that the additional information about the historic landscape has given pause but that the original designation was based on building technology of the bridge and not the historic nature of the site.

**Ms. Sandom** asked Mr. Sandusky what will happen if the HPC postpones a decision.

**Mr. Sandusky** stated that the county will move forward anyway most likely with a steel stringer structure that would allow a left turning lane. He explained that the Rosedale Road bridge was reconstructed with pre-stressed concrete beams with stone facing. He said that a steel stringer bridge would cost 2.2 million dollars and a truss bridge would cost 1.9 million but would not offer the option of a left turning lane.

**Ms. Sandom** asked if there would be any leeway with the county's position on the bridge.

**Mr. Sandusky** stated that there are too many limitations based on the need of providing a left turning lane.

**Ms. Ackerman** asked about keeping the existing T formation.

**Ms. Sandom** said there was a concern about accidents and safety with the T formation and that moving forward they are trying to make improvements.

An member of the public asked Mayor Sandom if she still felt the bridge should be moved. She said yes.

**Mr. Blackwell** stated that the HPC has no absolute power or control but that over the years the county has listened to the concerns of the HPC as a courtesy.

**Ms. Crabtree** stated she was not comfortable making a decision without more information.

**Mr. Robbins** made a motion to postpone the decision. Ms. Ackerman seconded. A vote was not taken.

**Mark Solomon** a representative of Janssen Pharmaceutica stated that his client does not have a position regarding the bridge except that the issue has been ongoing since 1986 and they would like an understanding of what is going on and would like to see some sort of conclusion. He asked if the existing bridge would be preserved or will they discuss a replacement and what it will look like. He added that exception is taken to the charges regarding a lack of transparency.

**Beth Kerr** stated that if Janssen was a good neighbor they would have fixed the existing bridge. She argued that they do not pay enough taxes and that she is disaapointed in Mr. Hughes lack of responsiveness to the people's concerns

**Janet Schaub** of 1535 Harbourton Rocktown Road wanted to know why the mayor invited Janssen to be on the bridge task force and not the Kerrs.

The mayor responded that she was not acquainted with the Kerrs at the time.

**Mr. Hayden** stated that there has been transparency throughout the process and he takes exception to Mr. Markulec's letter. He admitted that the HPC did not consider the Victory Trail during the designation process but added that Washington did not cross a King Iron Truss Bridge.

**Ms. Ackerman** stated that she would like to revisit option # 2 to see if it was in fact SOI compliant and also look at the original designation to see if the view shed was part of the designation and if the new roadway alignment will protect the view shed.

**Ms. Crabtree** stated that she has trouble imagining the replacement bridge options in the context of the existing bridge and cannot make a decision.

**Mr. Blackwell** stated that he would like to discuss the bridge project with representatives of the Crossroads of the American Revolution.

**Mr. Robbins** made a motion to postpone the decision regarding a recommendation for a replacement bridge. Ms. Ackerman seconded. All were in favor.

**Ms. Crabtree** said that the commissioners would need a copy of the original designation and possibly a site visit.

**Mr. Hansbury** thanked the commissioners for their support and reiterated that the Calhoun Street bridge and the Washington Crossing bridge have lower ratings and have been rehabbed in place.

**Mr. Sandusky** stated that as an engineer he has to proceed.

At 10:04pm there being no further business the meeting was adjourned.