

**Town of Chester
Highway Safety Committee Meeting
Tuesday, September 18th, 2018
Municipal Complex Meeting Room
Approved Minutes**

I Preliminaries

10:00am Call the Meeting to Order
Roll Call
Chairman's Additions or Deletions
Allan Yu, SNHPC: Roadway Safety Audit
Michael Dugas & Steven Ferguson, NHDOT: 102/121 Intersection Update
Date of Next Meeting & Adjournment

1.1 Call to Order

Chairman Berube called this meeting of the Town of Chester Highway Safety Committee at 10:07am.

1.2 Roll Call

Present:

Aaron Berube, Police Chief, Committee Chair
Greg Bolduc, Fire Chief (departed 10:14am)
Myrick Bunker, Building Inspector / Code Enforcement Officer
Stephen D'Angelo, BOS Liaison
Michael Dugas, P.E. – NHDOT
Steven Ferguson, LLS – NHDOT
Andrew Hadik, Planning Coordinator
Jean Methot
Michael Oleson, Road Agent
Allan Yu, Principal Transportation Planner – SNHPC

1.3 Chairman's Additions or Deletions

Chairman Berube moved to allow the representatives from Southern NH Planning Commission (SNHPC) and NH Department of Transportation (NHDOT) to present first and to conduct the regular meeting later; Planning Coordinator Hadik seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative; so moved.

II. New Business

2.1 Allan Yu, SNHPC: Roadway Safety Audit

Allan Yu, Principal Transportation Planner from SNHPC, appeared before the Committee to discuss the Roadway Safety Audit, High Crash Location Study, and the Regional Warrant. Two maps of the Town were displayed: "Intersections with Fatal / Incapacitating Crashes" and "Streets with Incapacitating Crashes." Two separate fatalities have occurred near the Derry line on Route 102; and one fatality occurred at Rod & Gun Club Road and Route 102. Mr. Yu encouraged the Town to submit the Road Safety Audit application packet by the end of the

month to increase the likelihood that NHDOT will approve funding to study these dangerous areas further.

Selectman D'Angelo expressed his concern with the fog lines being painted so close to the edge of pavement in some areas of Route 102 near the Derry line. Last weekend, a discarded refrigerator was placed by the road in this area, which seemed hazardous. Chairman Berube added that there can be a significant shoulder drop-off here, which is believed to contribute to accidents. Mr. Yu suggested that details such as these be included on the application. Michael Dugas, State Highway Safety Engineer from NHDOT added that NHDOT prefers to study places with a history of at least one crash in the past 10 years, or places with a pattern of crashes.

Selectman D'Angelo felt that Route 102 in the vicinity of Wason Pond would be worthwhile to study. Mr. Hadik noted that years ago there had been two fatalities on Haverhill Road near the Center of Town, but it had become challenging to find data on this.

Chairman Berube asked why there were no rumble strips in the area with the most fatalities-- 102 approaching Derry. Mr. Dugas explained that NHDOT simply hasn't gotten to it yet; and that there has also been pushback. Next month, NHDOT will be reevaluating rumble strip design, with the intent of developing some that are less noisy but just as effective; then possible candidates for the new design will be determined. Currently NHDOT doesn't put rumble strips on roadways less than thirty-two feet wide. Chairman Berube noted that since rumble strips have been placed on Route 102 (from the Raymond line to the Edwards Mill intersection) there has been a decrease in head-on & distracted driving crashes along that stretch. Mr. Dugas added that NHDOT considers rumble strips to be a proactive, proven safety counter measure.

2.2 *Michael Dugas, NHDOT: Route 102/121 Intersection Update*

Mr. Dugas used the same PowerPoint presentation recently given to the BOS to recap the status of the Route 102/121 Intersection Improvement Study. As per the 2011 Road Safety Audit, possible long-term measures include an all-way stop, traffic signal, or roundabout; with the latter being considered the favorite. The DMV has reported sixty-four crashes and thirteen injuries in ten years. The most common occurrences have been failure to yield/stop, and sideswipes along Route 102.

The Derry rotary and Laconia & Pelham roundabouts were discussed. In particular, the Derry rotary does not exemplify modern design; it's so large that many vehicles are able to practically travel straight through it. Mr. Dugas explained that a key element of safer, modern roundabouts is their smaller diameter which forces vehicles to slow down to use them. Crosswalks are placed *in* the Derry circle; Mr. Dugas explained that newer designs such as Laconia place crosswalks in splitter islands in the entering and departing roads.

The Laconia roundabout incorporates a truck apron, raised to prevent cars while allowing large trucks to pass; it also has a central island for landscaping. Should a roundabout be installed, Chester would have the option of entering a formal beautification agreement with NHDOT.

Use of the modern roundabout is considered "intuitive"; vehicles entering behave as if turning right out of a driveway. The small size slows vehicles (to fifteen to twenty MPH); paths are deflected and there are fewer conflict points, thus reducing crashes and crash severity. Modern roundabouts are safer for pedestrians and bicyclists, and more efficient for motorists.

In Pelham, a previously-dangerous intersection has become safer since two roundabouts were

installed. Residents consider their village center to be revitalized, and they enjoy reduced emissions due to less cars idling. Pelham center features monuments, which were given their own triangle due to the alteration of the roadways.

Flashing beacons placed atop the STOP signs on 121 are considered a medium-term measure and are slated to be installed end of September or October. Chairman Berube noted that he was initially told this was going to be done in June.

Mr. Dugas noted that if signals are added, left turn lanes on 121 would need to be added as well. Jean Methot stated that such lanes would not be required by law. Mr. Methot noted that when he was the Chair of SNHPC, improving this intersection was added to a ten-year plan; however, he didn't envision something as radical as a roundabout and feared great impact would befall historically-significant areas. Mr. Dugas explained that no matter what long-term measure is taken to mitigate the intersection, there will be impact to the surrounding areas, one way or another.

Mr. Methot shared some information he recently discovered from a book on the History of Chester, regarding burial in the vicinity of the old Meeting House—it's quite uncertain where burial grounds may extend. There was also some question about the prior and current widths of Chester Street, Raymond Road, etc. Selectman D'Angelo wondered where engineering / excavation records of the original roads may exist. Steven Ferguson of NHDOT has an appointment with Town Clerk Newnan after this meeting to research Town records. Mr. Dugas noted that the surveyors that have been at work the past several months have yet to precisely determine the right-of-way.

Mr. Hadik and Selectman D'Angelo, respectively, emphasized that the intersection is extremely dangerous and a source of frustration on many levels. The growth in Town, as well as the expansion of I-93 and Exit 4A have made this an unavoidable issue. Both agree it will be very important to attempt to minimize impact to historical / burial areas in any way possible.

Chairman Berube asked whether the State or the Town owns the rights-of-way; Mr. Dugas explained that the State doesn't own them, but it has a right to have a highway on them. Mr. Ferguson explained that, based on current data, the burial area is likely within the bounds of the current Cemetery; this area may have been part of the ten-rod right-of-way, ~three-and-a-half-rods of which is the current roadway. Mr. Ferguson noted that there is sometimes a lack of clarity in defining this; sixteen-and-a-half feet is considered a rod, while eighteen feet is a "Scottish rod".

Maps shown to the Committee illustrate the initial proposed layout of the roundabout to have a larger impact near Stevens Memorial Hall. Mr. Methot asked if the entrance to the Chester General Store would need to be changed; Mr. Dugas explained that the entry point would be kept beyond the splitter island. There was discussion about the proposed one-hundred-and-twenty-five-foot diameter. Mr. Hadik recently spoke with a resident concerned about the feasibility of driving his logging truck through the roundabout; it was noted that the roundabout would accommodate a fifty-three-foot straight truck so there should be no problem.

There would be crosswalks placed on all four of the affected roads; and if the Town should wish to install sidewalks, a maintenance contract between the Town and NHDOT could be executed. Mr. Hadik asked if a power pole could be relocated; Mr. Dugas said that the utility companies typically don't want to pay for this, but the Town could pay to have it done. The cost to relocate existing fiber optic lines, however, would be included in the project expense. Mr. Dugas

explained that a retaining wall could potentially be added to the Stevens Hall embankment; this would be done with modern methods yet include a façade to match the surrounding architectural feel.

Mr. Dugas explained that the topographic survey was done in Summer 2018; this Fall / Winter the public will be invited to an informational session, mid-2019 a Public Hearing will be held, allowing NHDOT to use eminent domain, and 2019-2021 a detailed design will be presented along with the right-of-way process (in which NHDOT may purchase property as needed). Mr. Methot noted that 2022 marks the Town's 300th anniversary. Selectman D'Angelo mentioned that the BOS had discussed having Mr. Dugas present information at Town Meeting / annual School Board Meeting; Mr. Dugas agreed and will be happy to meet with any group.

Chairman Berube asked if the Exit 4A project would affect this in any way; Mr. Dugas said no, the two projects are funded by completely different sources.

IV. Adjournment

The next meeting of the Highway Safety Committee is scheduled for Tuesday, December 18th, 2018 at 10:00am in the Municipal Complex Meeting Room.

Road Agent Oleson moved to postpone discussion of the remaining agenda items to the next meeting; Building Inspector Bunker seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative; so moved.

Building Inspector Bunker moved to adjourn the meeting; Road Agent Oleson seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative; so moved.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:19am.

Respectfully Submitted,
Caroline R. Wilson, Recording Secretary