

Edgartown Planning Board
May 5, 2015 at 5:30 PM
Meeting Minutes

Members in Attendance: Robert Cavallo, Fred Mascolo, Michael McCourt, Robert Sparks and Alan Wilson
Staff in Attendance: Georgiana Greenough, Assistant; and Lucy Morrison, Clerk

Chairman Fred Mascolo called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM. Mr. Mascolo's term as chairman has expired. Mr. Mascolo moved to elect Mr. McCourt as the new chairman. Mr. Wilson seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. Mr. McCourt stated that Mr. Mascolo has wrestled some tough issues during his one year as chairman and commended Mr. Mascolo for a job well done.

5:32 PM: Public Hearing - Simpson's Lane & Ferry Staging Line to Chappaquiddick

In Attendance: Michael Donaroma, Johnathan Chatinover, Dudley Cannada, Peter Wells, Roger Becker, Dave Rossi, Sally Snipes-Wells, Edith Blake, Priscilla Leclerc, Chris Kennedy, Nancy Kelly, Claire Thacher, Bill Veno, Collin Floyd, Ron Monterosso, Allyson Getsinger, Beth O'Connor, Heidi Raihofer, Ron Pearst, Joanna Brine, Diane Roy, and others – see sign in sheet.

Mr. McCourt stated that the purpose of this hearing is to gather information to devise a solution to the issues with the Chappy ferry line. Most people present are well aware of the issues, and he requested that the audience steer away from announcing the current problems, and look to the future for ways to make a positive impact on the situation. Mr. McCourt announced that the hearing will probably be continued, and there will be more opportunities to speak on the subject.

Mr. McCourt asked Michael Donaroma to give a statement on behalf of the Board of Selectmen regarding the referral of Chappy Ferry Line/Simpson's Lane. Mr. Donaroma stated that he does not have an opinion at this point. He said that previous Planning Boards have attempted to tackle this issue several times; some of the ideas have included staging at the Edgartown School, or even the high school; walkie-talkies, or other intercom systems; and changing the traffic patterns on Dock Street and Daggett Ave. He stated that the ferry owners have done their best to alleviate the situation, and were even looking into purchasing nearby properties to expand the operation. Mr. Donaroma stated that he is looking forward to hearing some recommendations.

Jonathan Chatinover, a resident of Simpson's Lane, stated that currently, vehicles line up on Daggett Ave and North Water St to Simpson's Lane. During peak periods, the line can back up to Pease's Point Way. Simpson's Lane is also the designated bike route to the ferry. This means that pedestrians, bikes, and cars are piled into a waiting line on a narrow street with no sidewalks. Mr. Chatinover's biggest concern is that an emergency vehicle won't be able to make it through the line of vehicles. He urged the Board to focus on short term solutions, as opposed to long term. He suggested doubling up the line on Daggett Ave, and providing room for a couple of vehicles on North Water St. This would accommodate enough

cars for approximately a one hour wait-time. He suggested that a long term solution would be a modified reservation system.

Dudley Cannada, a resident of North Water St, presented several handouts to the Board. At its narrowest, Simpson's Lane is 15'4", and at its widest it is 17 feet. It is physically impossible for vehicles that are eight feet wide with mirrors to pass each other, and even normal sized cars have trouble. He added that pedestrians frequently use Simpson's Lane to cut from North Water St to the bus terminal on Church St; and since there are no sidewalks, it can be dangerous and difficult for both the cars and the pedestrians to negotiate through. He stated that waiting in the ferry line is not a pleasant experience for anyone involved. People often do not turn off their engines, pull up as close as possible to the car in front of them, which blocks driveways. He commended the ferry operators for their work, and stated that they do an excellent job of turning the ferries, but it can still take over ten minutes for the line to move and the driveway to be cleared. He also commented that many tourists do not know that they are waiting in the Chappy ferry waiting line, and even those that are intentionally waiting do not know how long they're going to be in line. He recommended having signs along the street that estimate the wait times based on location. He finished by saying that if the Chappy ferry line were moved, and Simpson's Lane became a moving street, it would help alleviate some of the traffic on Main St.

Mr. Mascolo asked about the duration of problem. The residents answered that the ferry line is unpredictable. The line begins to be an issue in May, becoming progressively worse into June through the summer, and can remain a problem through September and October, depending on the weather. The landscaping companies schedule their services for Thursdays, which make it an especially difficult day due to many large trucks. Mr. Mascolo suggested dispersing some of the service traffic to other days or other times when the ferry is not as busy. It was agreed by all present that the biggest sources of the issues are tourists, bicycles and pedestrians.

Jonathan Chatinover mentioned that there are eight driveways on Simpson's Lane that all get blocked. He also stated that the driveways on the other side of Simpson's Lane have an even harder time, since there is no turning room. He suggested using another street to hold the line.

The Board requested the opinion of Peter Wells, the owner of the Chappy ferry. Mr. Wells stated that he was present in the audience to listen and learn; and that he does not have an opinion, that he is willing to try whatever the Board recommends. He noted that the unpredictability makes the planning especially challenging.

It was noted that emergency vehicle access would be difficult if there was a double lane of cars on Daggett Ave. The police would need to direct traffic around the block in order to allow for an emergency vehicle.

Mr. Mascolo asked if having another slip would make a difference in the line. Mr. Wells stated that it would, and that he is about to send plans for a third ferry to the Coast Guard for approval. He was thinking that the new boat would only carry pedestrians and bicyclists, which would help speed up service of the cars. Mr. Mascolo asked who would be paying for the new slip. Mr. Donaroma stated that the slips are owned by the Town and maintained by Mr. Wells. No one present had an estimate on how

much it would cost to add a new slip. Mr. Wells elaborated, stating that a similar facility could be placed on the other side of Memorial Wharf, which would serve and the pedestrian and bicycle boat. He also suggested that the Town provide parking elsewhere in town for the residents of Simpson's Lane for when they are unable to access their driveways. These spaces could be designated with placards of some kind.

Mr. McCourt asked what Mr. Wells thought of the idea to double up the line on Daggett Ave. Mr. Wells did not think it would be effective. Mr. Donaroma asked if more wide vehicles could be directed to Dock St. Mr. Wells explained that the cut line on Dock St is for utility vehicles, like cement trucks and UPS trucks, and that only about four vehicles can be staged there before the street gets blocked.

Mr. Chatinover commented that many people are claiming that Daggett Ave is too narrow to have a double lane of cars. He noted that Simpson's Lane is narrower than Daggett Ave, so it is a matter of perspective. He also stated that there is no more room on Dock St, and other options should be considered.

Mr. Wells stated that he is willing to try lining the cars up double on Daggett Ave, but did not think that it would work as a viable solution.

Roger Becker stated that pedestrians use Daggett Ave to get to the ferry. He speculated that if the road is filled with cars, that no one could walk down that way.

Mr. Mascolo stated that pedestrians can still come in through Dock St, and requested that Mr. Wells or Officer Rossi alert the Board if an idea blatantly won't work for any reason. Mr. McCourt stated that the goal of this hearing is to hear as many opinions and ideas as possible.

Edith Blake suggested changing the direction of traffic on North Water St, so that traffic comes down to Daggett Ave from the Harborview. She commented that if there was no parking on that street, there would be ample room to accommodate the waiting line and allow cars to pass easily.

Mr. Rossi stated that the ferry staging has obviously been a problem, and that no one has figured it out yet. He stated that he would like to avoid moving the problem from one area to another, and commented that Dock St is very busy, especially with pedestrians, who have a tendency to walk in the middle of the street. He also noted that people use Dock St to access North Water St, and that access should not be blocked. He thought that providing parking elsewhere for both Simpson's Lane and Chappaquiddick residents was a good idea. He commented that any plan that requires the use of traffic officers to monitor the line takes those officers away from other places where they could be needed.

Mr. McCourt mentioned that staging the line at the Edgartown School has been experimented with, and asked for Mr. Rossi's opinion on that idea. Officer Rossi commented that the staging at the school did not work. Many tourists are not familiar with the area and got lost. There have been many attempts to use that lot for something, since it's not being used outside of the school year, but so far, all have failed.

Mr. McCourt asked if an officer could be stationed on Simpson's Lane. Officer Rossi asked who would provide those recourses. The Board looked to Mr. Donaroma, who in turn, looked to Mr. Wells. The audience laughed.

Mr. Cavallo asked Officers Rossi's opinion of doubling up the cars on Daggett Ave. Mr. Rossi replied that he didn't think it will work. He said that it might fit a few more cars, but it won't make a large enough difference, and causes a larger problem with pedestrian access.

Mr. Wells encouraged the Board to come to the line and try it. Mr. Cavallo asked how many more cars would fit on Daggett Ave by doubling the line. Pricilla Leclerc, the MVC traffic planner, said 15; Mr. Wells said 12. Mr. Mascolo asked if 12-15 cars would make a difference on Simpson's Lane traffic. Mr. Wells replied yes and no.

Ms. Leclerc said that she feels new to the ferry issue, and that a lot of what she has to offer has already been mentioned. She recommended the Board try the double lane on Daggett Ave sometime this month to see how it works. She said that there would be better communication if the line was only on Daggett Ave, due to the sightlines. She also said that if the line continues onto Simpson's Lane, it would be helpful to have a person monitor the line to keep the driveways clear. Mr. Wells stated that with the break in the line between Daggett Ave and Simpson's Lane, there is a visual gap and people try to cut in line, and someone has to constantly run back and forth to monitor the situation. Mr. Wells stated that an ideal solution would reduce the manpower involved.

Mr. McCourt asked if Mr. Wells has tried using North Water St to hold some of the line. Mr. Wells stated that he has, but it got convoluted quickly with the parking spaces in front of the library. He speculated that it may work better once the library moves, and those spaces could be erased. Mr. Wilson commented that the area gets congested quickly.

Chris Kennedy mentioned that the Trustees of Reservations conducted a Chappaquiddick traffic study in 2001 and 2002, which examined who was in the ferry line, and where they were going. There was an average of 802 vehicles round trip per day, with peak waiting times between 9 AM and 5 PM. Of the total number of people using the ferry during the summer, only 25% were going to visit the beaches. The travelers were mainly residents, renters or service workers. Mr. Kennedy also added that the access to Norton Point will also be closed for about six weeks due to nesting shorebirds, so the beach access will provide no relief.

Ms. Leclerc suggested that Mr. Wells charge more for visitors than residents, in order to manage some of the demand. She also suggested that visitors park at the park and ride and then walk over. However, it was noted that without a vehicle, it is difficult to explore Chappaquiddick, since there is no public transportation on the other side. She suggested limiting the hours that service vehicles can take the ferry, so they avoid busy times; and providing a separate line for large trucks, noting that it would need to be able to house more than four vehicles. She also suggested that there be more communication with the people waiting in line as it moves, or by providing more visual information by ways of signage. Ms. Leclerc also suggested that a flyer be made to increase awareness and improve knowledge of the situation.

The Board asked if Mr. Wells had any thoughts on designating travel times. Mr. Wells commented that the tide is an important factor, especially for heavy vehicles. Mr. Mascolo stated that he would be opposed to any idea that would jeopardize keeping the ferry open and running. He asked if there could be two slips on each side. Mr. Wells responded that it would be possible and that there is already a spare slip on the Chappaquiddick side; but he needs another boat. Mr. Mascolo mentioned the bike ferry in Menemsha. Mr. Wells speculated that that boat is only about 12 feet by 20 feet, and only carries about six bikes. He noted that he would need something larger.

Nancy Kelly suggested using the Memorial Wharf parking lot as the staging area. Mr. Wells stated that he would need to try it. He said that it could get confusing, since people would be entering where they're exiting, unless other traffic patterns were changed as well.

Claire Thatcher, a Chappaquiddick resident, stated that Memorial Wharf is the center of downtown Edgartown, and that it is an important heart of the town. She said that she would like to see a solution to this problem, but would hate to see Memorial Wharf look like the Steamship Authority staging area. Mr. McCourt mentioned that that was a good point.

Bill Veno elaborated on the survey that was referenced by Mr. Kennedy, and stated that many people – both residents and tourists – said that they would consider using public transportation on Chappy. He urged the Board to consider a transit service as a long range solution.

Mr. Mascolo stated that the area is currently set up like a horseshoe and would need to be reconfigured to have staging.

The Board began to read letters submitted from the public.

Liza Murrell wrote on March 9th with suggestions to improve signage, clearly paint lines on the pavement where cars should not park, limit the size of vehicles allowed on Simpson's Lane, and enforce the system with two traffic officers.

Tim O'Connell waived the reading of his letter. He was present and was in favor of doubling up the cars on Daggett Ave.

Dudley Cannada waived the reading of his letter dated February 24th and referred to his presentation earlier in the hearing. Beth O'Connor and Jonathan Chatinover also waived the reading of their letter dated February 22nd.

Ms. Greenough read a letter from Mark and Ann Cassella that was received on March 26th to urge the Board to consider alternative staging areas.

Donna & Frank McPartland wrote on April 29th to suggest other staging areas and the use of an updated reservation system using pagers or a smartphone app.

Bob Yantorno wrote on April 30th to ask how much growth is expected on Chappaquiddick in the next five to ten years.

Dennis Goldin wrote on April 30th to oppose any changes unless priority access is given to Chappaquiddick residents.

Jonathan Cobb wrote on April 30th to oppose any changes to the current system.

Sam Fuller wrote on April 30th to oppose any changes to the current system.

Lionel Spiro wrote on May 1st to suggest a preferential line for Chappaquiddick property owners, and to encourage long term planning. DCPC

John Chirgwin wrote on May 4th to urge the Board to take action to alleviate the problems and congestion on Simpson's Lane.

The Board decided to postpone the reading of the letters to hear the opinions of those in the audience.

Collin Floyd, a commercial fisherman and resident of Chappaquiddick, stated that the area for the proposed new slip is currently being used, and was opposed to any more disruption of the wharf.

Ron Monterosso, a resident of Chappaquiddick, stated that he was in favor of having parking spaces reserved for Chappy residents, but noted that a substantial number of designated spaces would be necessary. He also stated that staging from remote parking lots is not a good solution, since it creates gaps in the line and people get lost.

Allyson Getsinger, a resident of Chappaquiddick, asked the Board to consider the owner of 59 Daggett Ave, who has three driveways on Daggett Ave, which would be completely blocked if the line were doubled. The Board commented that this property also has a driveway on North Water St.

Beth O'Connor, a resident of Simpson's Lane stated that her biggest fear is that a firetruck will be unable to get to her house. She said that she doesn't understand how the street could be cleared in time. She also noted that she has had to budget for minor repairs each summer, because a car will inevitably hit the fence, and her cars get dinged.

Officer Rossi stated that the situation on Simpson's Lane is not ideal, but assured Ms. O'Connor that there will be communication in the event of an emergency. If a call for service is made, the traffic on Simpson's Lane will immediately be directed to take a left on North Water St and not come back. The line of traffic on the road will be completely cleared by the time the ambulance or fire truck arrives. Officer Rossi stated that he does not think it will be a dramatic event, and that it can happen quickly; especially since there is a traffic officer already stationed on Simpson's Lane.

Mr. Wells recalled a time when there was a fire on Chappaquiddick, and the responders from West Tisbury did not know that they were supposed to load from Dock St, since their GPS directed them to approach from Daggett Ave. Mr. Wells stated that he was able to quickly move the cars out of the way, and speculated that Simpson's Lane would be even easier to clear. Sally Snipes-Wells commented that the drivers are waiting in their cars; and it is much easier to have them move than if the cars were parked with no drivers present.

Heidi Raihofer, the manager of Lighthouse Inn of Simpson's Lane, approached the Board to present pictures of cars blocking various driveways on Simpson's Lane. She stated that has witnessed people waiting in the line openly defy the traffic officer's orders many times. She commented that referring to the traffic study conducted in 2002 is not helpful since the numbers are so much higher now. She stated that enforcing the line is a big job for only one officer. She recommended moving the line out of a residential neighborhood, and instating a new reservation system where people call ahead to order a time slot. She stated that she wants the line to move faster and be more efficient. She stated that there needs to be both long and short term solutions.

Claire Thatcher stated that the problem is growth. The expectations that residents have are for a small town mentality, but the island quickly becomes urban in the summer. If these problems are compared to city problems, residents know they can't park next to their houses. Change expectations. Everything we do is going to affect someone else. She said that making the line move faster won't lessen the traffic, since if the line moves faster, more people are going to use it. She urged the Board to think of downtown in the summer like a city. She also added that not enough information is given to tourists about what to expect on island, and that the brochures need to provide more accurate information.

Roger Becker urged against staging at Memorial Wharf, and stated that he was concerned about how to route the bikes and people around the double line of cars on Daggett Ave. He said that the Board should do the experiment, but predicted a poor reading because of the use of the road by bikers and pedestrians. Currently, there is one line of cars, and all of the other space is used by foot traffic. He also stated that he agreed with Ms. Raihofer, that there should be a point at which the line is full, and the traffic is directed to come back at a later time.

Mr. McCourt reminded that audience that the main purpose for the hearing is to gather ideas.

Ron Pearst, the general manager for Edgartown Commons, stated that he was opposed to adding a third line of traffic by the bike racks on Pease's Point Way, as was recommended in an article in the Vineyard Gazette.

Mr. Cavallo asked if a queue line where the bike racks are located had been considered. Mr. Rossi stated that it was the first he'd heard of it. But did not recommend the idea, since there are a lot of bikes downtown and the racks are often full. Mr. Cavallo stated that another location for the bike racks would be necessary. Mr. Cavallo also suggested residents of Simpson's Lane place cones or some other barrier in front of their driveways. Stuart Fuller, the Highway Superintendent, would need to be consulted.

Officer Rossi commented that the infrastructure of the roads does not have the capacity for growth; that the solution lies in people and services, which cost money. He urged the residents of Simpson's Lane to alert the Police Department and the Board of Selectmen that more manpower is necessary to monitor the line.

Joann Brine asked how many citations are given to people on Simpson's Lane. Officer Rossi responded that the incidents are not currently being reported and that there are no punitive actions being taken at this time. He recommended more signage on the road, as the infractions are not always intentional.

Diane Roy, a Chappaquiddick resident, suggested painting the road to make it clear where cars should not be. She stated that people often don't realize how long the wait will be, that it is difficult to determine how far ahead the line will be moving, and speculated that many driveways get blocked on accident.

Mr. Mascolo asked if the ferry signs and lines in the road could be color coordinated, so that it is clear that they are related. He suggested marking the lines for the ferry with the same color as the ferries, since people associate the colors together.

Roger Becker stated that when the Steamship Authority is overrun with people waiting for boats, that they are told to come back later. He suggested a similar situation for the Chappy ferry when the line becomes too long.

Ron Monterosso stated that he was opposed to stopping the line at the end of Daggett Ave. He did not like the idea of Chappaquiddick residents floating around town without knowing when they'll be able to get home.

Beth O'Connor suggested that the Simpson's Lane line be only for Chappaquiddick residents, who understand where the driveways are, and know to turn their engines off, and are respectful to the neighborhood; while the tourists are turned away and asked to return at a later time.

Mr. McCourt stated that he thought a lot was accomplished at this hearing, and that the Board is open to the ideas of the public. He stated that the Board will spend the next week honing in on some of the ideas to find a viable solution to pass on to the Board of Selectmen. He speculated that if the town continues to work together, a reasonable solution will be found.

Mr. Sparks added that this hearing was not a response to pressure from some claimed well-connected individuals, as was suggested in some of the letters. He stated that the Board met many of the individuals living on Simpson's Lane for the first time at this hearing. Mr. Sparks stated that the Board is motivated by the Town's needs in general, that there is a safety issue with the current ferry line, and that is why the Board is examining other configurations.

Mr. Mascolo stated that Peter Wells does a fabulous job. He accommodates people in a way that shows a dedication to humanity, and that he will oppose any idea that limits the business. He stated that the ferry provides year-round service, and that any decision should work with him, not against him.

Mr. Cavallo stated that the Board will follow up on the idea to double up the line on Daggett Ave.

Mr. Wilson commented that the meeting was run very well, and commended Mr. McCourt for a good first meeting. He stated that the audience presented some good suggestions, and the Board will discuss them for the continuation.

Mr. Sparks moved to continue the hearing to next Tuesday, May 12th at 5:30. Mr. Mascolo seconded, and the motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

The Board thanked everyone in the audience for attending.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:38 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lucy Morrison

<i>Michael McCourt, Chairman</i>

<i>Robert Cavallo</i>

<i>Fred Mascolo</i>

<i>Robert Sparks</i>

<i>Alan O. Wilson</i>
Edgartown Planning Board
Date signed: _____