

Minutes for St. George Fort Point Abutter Meeting held on Saturday January 30, 2021 in the Fort Point Parking Lot

Attendance: Ad Hoc Committee Members: Ken Oelberger, Tim Polky, Jerry Hall, Dale Pierson, Tom Gorrill

Abutters: Scott Hoskins, Richard Paulsen II, Lori Gary, Richard & Carol Paulsen, Sherry & James Pearson, Susan Henderson, Ruth Harvey and Pat Laxton

Summary of Discussion:

Jerry gave a brief summary of the project, highlighting that the trail is in poor shape, the Conservation Commission (CC) would like to repair the trail and the bridge, and the State may fund 100% of the construction project if the trail is made Universally Accessible (UA) and expanded to include the State's Fort Point Property. The Select Board (SB) appointed an Ad Hoc Committee to investigate this possibility. However, at the December meeting with the abutters, the Ad Hoc committee got an earful.

Jerry summarized the reasons the Abutters were against increased use of trail:

1. People trespassing on abutters' land is a major issue.
2. The parking lot is believed to intrude onto private property.
3. Trail users' dogs run loose onto abutters' property, creating numerous issues.
4. Inappropriate use of the parking lot at night--is noisy, attracts an undesirable crowd and resultant activities.
5. There is a significant problem with discarded trash and other objects, at least in the parking lot area.

Jerry said that given the concerns raised, the Fort Point Ad Hoc Trail committee concluded:

1. The proposed plan to create a UA trail should be shelved.
2. The Committee should take the abutters' feedback to the SB, along with initial recommendations regarding these concerns.

At the meeting with the SB, the following next steps were recommended:

1. Have the property surveyed.
2. Once boundaries are known, put up signs and/or barriers, as appropriate, to reduce trespassing. This will be done in collaboration with abutters.
3. Once boundaries are known, adjust the parking lot area to respect property lines, if appropriate. Again, this will be done in collaboration with abutters.

Jerry said it is difficult to address the dogs running loose but the Committee is willing to work with the abutters to find solutions. There are also a few options for addressing the parking lot use issue at night, such as lighting. The Committee would like to work with the abutters to see what actions might be taken.

Jerry said the sense of the Committee and SB is that the trash issue is related to the parking lot use issue. The Committee would like to discuss this with the abutters and work out a program where the Town will periodically remove trash from the area.

Jerry said the Committee and the SB feel a representative from the abutters should be added to the Committee. Further, he said as a plan to repair the trail is still needed, the SB asked the CC to consider how that might be done over a multiple year period in a manner that would not preclude potential future UA implementation, using available grants where appropriate to minimize the cost to the Town.

Following Jerry's remarks, he asked the abutters for any comments they may have.

Abutter comments:

Concern was expressed with hunting that occurs in the area. During discussion it was pointed out that while hunting is allowed on the State property, State law prohibits hunting within 300 feet of a residence, leaving very little area where hunting can occur. Jerry said the Town could explore designating the area as a no hunting zone. It was concluded that the shots that are heard are likely coming from duck hunters.

Lori Gary commented that the dogs are not really a big issue for her, but that she is concerned when she asks people to put their dog on a leash and is verbally abused in response. She said she was pleased with the Committee's response to the abutters concerns and that the UA project has been shelved at least for now. She said she would welcome the opportunity to work with the CC on repairing the trail.

Other abutters echoed Lori's comments.

Meeting concluded at approximately 10:20 AM