

REPORT OF MEETING

Subject: Report of Meeting - Haverhill 16238 – Mill Street over Ammonoosuc Rail Trail

Meeting Date: February 28, 2013

**Location: Woodsville Emergency Services Building, 4910 Dartmouth College Highway,
Woodsville, NH 03785**

Attendance: Byron Charles, Jr., Chief of Police
Glenn English, Haverhill Town Manager
Bruce Labs, Superintendent of Schools for SAU 23
Linda Lauer, State Representative Grafton County District 15

15 Additional Members of the Haverhill Community (see attached sign-in sheet)

Bob Landry, NHDOT
Ron Kleiner, NHDOT
Darren Blood, GM2 Associates, Inc.
Jen Mercer, GM2 Associates, Inc.

Introductions were made and a project overview was provided.

The bridge is a red listed bridge. It is in the 10 year plan currently funded at \$500,000 for construction in 2018. Conceptual estimates have the bridge removal option at \$150,000 and the concrete arch replacement option at \$850,000.

The bridge is posted at 6 ton, so currently no emergency service vehicles can utilize it.

At the previous meeting with the Town Officials, the Town Manager mentioned providing a replacement option for this public meeting instead of just a removal option.

The concrete arch replacement option would consist of a 26' total roadway width which would allow for 2 – 11' lanes and 2 – 2' shoulders. Currently, the bridge is 1 lane with 16.6' curb-to-curb. The arch opening of 15'x15' (requested by DRED) would allow access for the standard trail grooming equipment.

It was asked if a single lane bridge could be built instead to save money. Because the bridge will be constructed with Federal funds, Federal design guidelines need to be followed. Therefore, the bridge has to be 2 lanes with a minimum width.

The bridge would be closed during construction.

It was noted that access from Mill Street onto US Route 302 (Central Street) is difficult due to the Dunkin Donuts across the street. It was reported that often there are large trucks parked in the

shoulders, so it's hard to see around them to get out. Residents prefer to go to over the bridge and use Wilson Street to get onto US Route 302 (Central Street).

An option to lower the profile of the bridge to limit the amount of fill was discussed. The resident suggested that ROW is not an issue because the Town owns between Mill Street and Wilson Avenue in the area of the bridge. ROW will need to be determined before this option can be looked at. The additional cost of the roadway improvements will likely negate any savings in fill costs lowering the profile would generate.

The suggestion of raising the grade of the Rail Trail with fill eliminating the need for a bridge was also discussed. With the current volume of ATV/snowmobile traffic it would create an additional safety issue, so this option does not seem viable and will not be explored further.

It was noted that the ball field adjacent to the bridge is also the high school softball field.

The Superintendent of Schools read a letter he drafted in favor of keeping the bridge (see attached). The bridge provides an emergency evacuation route for the children, if necessary. In his opinion, this safety benefit alone means the bridge should be replaced not removed.

The Chief of Police reiterated the Superintendent's thoughts and added that the police have had to use that bridge regularly for calls.

A majority of the residents felt the same way. The bridge should be replaced and not removed.

It was noted that if the bridge replacement option moves forward, then the State would expect the Town to take over ownership of the new bridge. The roadway is currently Town maintained with the bridge being State owned.

The abutter on Mill Street with the private drive does not like the Turnaround option because people already use his driveway even though signs are posted. Litter has been a problem.

It was asked if a sidewalk could be added to the bridge. Since the approach roadway does not have one, then it is unlikely. The State would have to see the Town's Master Plan which included sidewalks down Mill Street and Wilson Ave in order to construct one across the bridge. It was added that additional shoulder width could be provided if necessary.

Different types of guardrail and pedestrian railing were discussed especially because the bridge is often used by entire classrooms of children at once. Since the concrete arch replacement option is a buried structure, standard guardrail would be used, not bridge rail. There are 2:1 roadway slopes along the entire structure, not a drop off like with a traditional bridge. Therefore, pedestrian rail is not required. This lead to the sight distance discussion. Currently, the wood railing is difficult to see approaching vehicles through. This will not be an issue with the standard guardrail and the wider two-lane proposed width.

It was discussed that the next meeting would likely be in a couple of months, perhaps sometime in May where the Department would come back with more information to gather additional public input.

Please allow me to introduce myself. I am Bruce Labs, Superintendent of Schools for SAU 23 and in this case I represent the Haverhill Cooperative School District and in it the Precinct of Woodsville.

I wish to speak not about the savings by removing this bridge. I wish to speak about the potential loss of this bridge as an escape route in case there was ever a need to evacuate the school.

I remind you of our emergency plans in case there is an accident or chemical spill in front of the school at the busy intersection of Routes 10 and 302 is to move the children out of the area and harm's way. Or worse yet if there is an intruder of some kind we need this route to move the children to safety.

I speak on behalf of 232 students and 44 staff members and the impact to them if we could not get down Mill Street and out of potential harm's way. What impact does that have on any family in the community?

A few years ago when Wal-Mart was being constructed we put quite a lot of thought into the planning of the intersection in front of the school. You will notice that there are two fences across from Nootka Lodge on the

hill of Rte 302. You will also notice the cross walks and the traffic signals we insisted upon if the school was going to stay where it is.

The Mill Street Bridge is vital to the safety of the students at the school. When you consider the savings to dispose of the bridge also consider the risk that you add to the 232 students and 44 staff members. What you would be telling them is that their safety is not worth the cost of maintaining that emergency route.

The removal of the Mill Street Bridge should be out of the question. For anyone who has had children this is a matter of safety and security.

Please don't do this!