

**New Castle-Rye Bridge Project
Summary of Meeting
Cultural Resources Coordination Meeting
November 9, 2017**

Attendees:

Sheila Charles, NHDOT
Jill Edelmann, NHDOT
Victoria Chase, NHDOT
Marc Laurin, NHDOT
Bob Juliano, NHDOT
Jamie Sikora, FHWA
Laura Black, NHDHR
Edna Feighner, NHDHR
Ben Wilson, NH Bureau of Historic Sites
Jim Murphy, HDR
Stephanie Dyer-Carroll, FHI
Esther Kennedy, Consulting Party (by phone)
Steve Skoglund, Consulting Party (by phone)

The eighth coordination meeting with New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources (NHDHR) and Consulting Parties on the New Castle-Rye Bridge Project was held on November 9, 2017 at the offices of the New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT). Jim Murphy, Project Manager with HDR, opened the meeting, explaining that the construction bid date on the project has now shifted to early 2019, with the bridge closure occurring in the winter of 2020 to minimize construction impacts. Stephanie Dyer-Carroll, a Cultural Resources Specialist with Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc. (FHI), said the focus of the meeting would be on the comments received on the effects forms provided to NHDHR and Consulting Parties. She referenced a Draft Comment/Response Log sent by Jill Edelmann to NHDHR and Consulting Parties the prior week. Following the review of the Comment/Response Log, Stephanie said they would like to discuss the effects determinations in order to advance the Section 106 process. Laura Black with NHDHR said that NHDHR can't finalize the effect finding for the Wentworth-Coolidge Mansion without input from the Department of the Interior (DOI), since the Mansion is a National Historic Landmark. Jamie Sikora with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) said he spoke with David Clarke, FHWA's Federal Preservation Officer, and that FHWA hadn't coordinated with DOI because the National Park Service (NPS) doesn't have a regional office for New England. Jill Edelmann said she had contacted the National Office of NPS several days earlier, but hadn't heard back from them yet. She said she would try again.

Stephanie Dyer-Carroll then turned the conversation to the Draft Comment/Response Log. NHDOT and FHWA appreciated NHDHR's concurrence with the Adverse Effect findings for the NH 1B Bridge under both the Replacement with Bascule and Replacement with Fixed Bridge alternatives in comment 1. With regard to comment 2, FHWA will update the effects finding for the Wentworth by the Sea, under both the Replacement with Bascule and Replacement with Fixed Bridge alternatives, to No Historic Properties Affected. With regard to comment 3, NHDOT and FHWA appreciated NHDHR's concurrence with the No Adverse Effect findings for the 1874 Rye Bridge Abutments under both the Replacement with Bascule and Replacement with Fixed Bridge alternatives. In the event that the design changes, FHWA will notify NHDHR to determine the additional consultation necessary regarding effects to the 1874 Rye Bridge

Abutments. FHWA said they would update the effects finding for the Wentworth-Coolidge Mansion under the Replacement with Bascule Bridge Alternative to No Historic Properties Affected.

In comment 5, NHDHR indicated they had questions regarding historic use of and access to the Wentworth-Coolidge Mansion. These questions needed to be answered prior to making an effect finding for the Replacement with Fixed Bridge alternative. In response to comment 5.i, Stephanie Dyer-Carroll said research was undertaken at the Portsmouth Athenaeum to determine what size boats may have accessed the Mansion historically. She said references were found to smaller sailboats and barges in the 18th and 19th centuries, but that early 20th century photos were found of a larger schooner moored at the Wentworth-Coolidge dock. Ben Wilson with the NH Bureau of Historic Sites said this schooner was owned by John Coolidge. Laura Black with NHDHR said they believe larger ships traversed the Back Channel due to the existence of a warehouse at the Mansion in the 19th century. Products were taken offshore on gundalows and then loaded onto schooners. Ben Wilson said historically larger ships went in and out of the Back Channel through Little Harbor because it was considered to be safer waters. Governor Wentworth bought the property because he could see all the boat traffic from the shoreline.

Comments 5.ii and 6 addressed plans for the new dock at the Wentworth-Coolidge Mansion. Ben Wilson said the Bureau of Historic Sites plans to build the new dock within the next five years in an effort to increase site visitation and interpretation, attract recreational boaters, and foster a marine interpretive trail. He said there are also plans to potentially build a dock at Fort Stark. The Bureau of Historic Sites would like to partner with the Gundalow Company to bring the *Piscataqua* to the Wentworth-Coolidge Mansion with greater regularity. Ben Wilson said a fixed bridge would require the Gundalow Company to lower the yard on the *Piscataqua* in order to pass under the bridge. The *Piscataqua* must carry an additional crew member to do this.

In comment 5.iii, NHDHR asked why the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) would continue to dredge the channel if the fixed bridge would preclude boats that would use a deeper channel. Jim Murphy explained that a fixed bridge would not preclude the ongoing maintenance dredging of the Back Channel by USACE. As designed, the channel is six feet deep. Jim Murphy explained that the vertical clearance at high tide on a fixed bridge would be 16.52 feet, and clearance at low tide would be approximately 25.52 feet. He said USACE has no plans to discontinue dredging, nor are there plans to deepen the channel. He said the channel depth may be a greater limiting factor for boats than the vertical clearance. Ben Wilson asked when the last dredging was done. Jim Murphy said Sagamore Creek was dredged last year. Ben Wilson then asked why they dredged that area specifically. Jim Murphy didn't know, but said he would check with USACE.

Ben Wilson then reiterated what he said in comment 7. He expressed concerns about erosion and sea level rise due to climate change, stating that it's unclear what equipment may be required to maintain the waterfront at the Wentworth-Coolidge Mansion in the future. He said there's the possibility that the Wentworth-Coolidge Mansion could need to be moved, or that they could have to get a crane in the Back Channel to work on the waterfront. He said ideally the bridge between New Castle and Portsmouth should be a bascule, but that bridge doesn't require replacement. Stephanie Dyer-Carroll said they contacted three marine contractors who work in the Back Channel and they all said they generally access the Back Channel under the Marconi Bridge due to the wider horizontal clearance. Both Riverside and Pickering, and Prock Marine, said they cannot get their equipment under the NH 1B Bridge due to the horizontal clearance. Geoff Tortoriello with Pepperell Cove Marine Services said their barges fit under the NH 1B Bridge, but that the Marconi Bridge is more convenient. Esther Kennedy stated that

Cove Marine has concerns about a fixed bridge. Laura Black said NHDOT seems to be hesitant to restrict vehicle access, but they have no issues restricting boat traffic. Steve Skoglund asked whether cost is driving the identification of the fixed bridge as the preferred alternative. Jim Murphy said cost is one factor, but that other factors were also considered in the Benefit-Cost Analysis.

The discussion then moved on to comment 5.iv, which focused on the issues of convenience and permanence. Laura Black said NHDOT has talked a lot about the limited number of lifts per year, but she said the current bridge requires four hours lead time to have it opened which is inconvenient. A new bascule bridge could have a quicker turn-around which could encourage opening requests. Jim Murphy said it is possible to shorten the lead time with a remote lift, but that this is not a technology that NHDOT has previously used. This would require investment in new technology infrastructure, and assessment of whether this technology should be utilized. There are also concerns with pedestrian safety; remote lifts are not commonly done on crossings with pedestrian access. So, while possible, it is not definite or probable that remote lifts would be utilized with a new bascule bridge. Thus, an operator would likely still have to drive to the bridge to open it. Ben Wilson said some bridges, on the inter-coastal waterway, open on a regular schedule during peak seasons.

Laura Black then asked how the shallow depth of the Back Channel may impact future activities. Stephanie Dyer-Carroll said depths in the Back Channel are fairly shallow at low tide, especially outside of the Channel. This restricts the size and type of boat that can be kept in the Back Channel. Ben Wilson said Coolidge built a slip with a crib for his pinky schooner. He asked whether a fixed bridge could impact property values in the Back Channel. Jim Murphy said property values were looked at in the Benefit-Cost Analysis and that they hadn't been able to find any correlation between access and economics. Ben Wilson said NHDOT should contact Molly at the Gundalow Company about their use.

Comment 8 suggested a fixed bridge could potentially restrict the ability of area fire departments to fight fires in the Back Channel. Stephanie Dyer-Carroll said the project team had contacted both the New Castle and Portsmouth Fire Departments for input. Tracey Freeman at the Portsmouth Fire Department said they used to have a larger metal hulled fire boat, but that they'd recently given it to the Town of New Castle because they didn't use it enough. They have replaced it with a Zodiac which doesn't require much draft so they can reach more areas within the Back Channel. The Zodiac also doesn't require much vertical clearance. NHDOT also spoke with Fire Chief David Blanding of New Castle. Chief Blanding said the boat they received from Portsmouth requires 12 feet of vertical clearance and that their second boat is smaller and just requires six feet. Stephanie Dyer-Carroll therefore said a fixed bridge wouldn't affect firefighting from the water. Ben Wilson asked if either fire department mentioned partnerships with the Navy and their boats. Stephanie said they did not.

The discussion then moved on to effects to Creek Farm and comment 9. Stephanie Dyer-Carroll said FHWA has changed the effect finding for Creek Farm under the Replacement with Bascule Bridge alternative to No Historic Properties Affected. Stephanie Dyer-Carroll stated that NHDHR had requested information on the size and type of boats that historically accessed Creek Farm. She said research indicated that small to mid-sized boats were kept at Creek Farm early in the 20th century. Recent tenants have accessed the property by boat, but they haven't required a lift. Ben Wilson said Shoals Marine Lab, the most recent tenant, kept their larger boats in Portsmouth. Stephanie Dyer-Carroll said the 2016 dredge plans for the Back Channel demonstrate how shallow the depths are at low tide outside of the dredged channel. Ben Wilson said a future tenant could potentially use a marine railway to store a larger boat.

Laura Black said that unlike the Wentworth-Coolidge Mansion that must be maintained by the state, Creek Farm relies on a tenant for its long-term maintenance. She said it's possible a fixed bridge could deter future tenants who want to access the property by boat, thereby contributing to a cumulative adverse effect to the property. Stephanie Dyer-Carroll stated that the water depth off of Creek Farm's dock is very shallow, so a majority of boats, especially those that would require a lift, couldn't be moored there at low tide. Jim Murphy said dredging the area around the dock would require significant investment. Esther Kennedy stated that technologies are changing and depth may be less of an issue in the future. She said Witch Cove Marina has over forty boats that typically draw only two to five feet.

The discussion then moved on to the global comments provided by Esther Kennedy. She summarized her concerns, stating that safe harbor should be considered, as should the history of boating in the Back Channel. She suggested there is a lot of potential for increased boating in the Back Channel in the future and asked why the state would want to stifle that.

Having discussed each of the comments, Stephanie Dyer-Carroll asked if NHDHR was ready to make an effect finding for Creek Farm. Laura Black said the potential cumulative effect issues at Creek Farm and the Wentworth-Coolidge Mansion are similar, so NHDHR would like input from DOI before making the determination. Jamie Sikora said FHWA understands that NHDHR wants DOI input, but FHWA doesn't think there would be an adverse effect on any of the historic properties, except the NH 1B Bridge. He said FHWA would coordinate with the DOI, and they would revise the effects sheets to reflect the historic research undertaken. He said they can elevate the matter to the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation if they can't reach concurrence on the effects determinations. This would be coordinated through David Clarke, FHWA's Federal Preservation Officer.