

Sudbury Center Improvement Advisory Committee
Minutes
June 14, 2010

PRESENT: Scott Carpenter, Frank Riepe, Joe Sziabowski, Deborah Kruskal, Jim Hodder, June Allen, Larry O'Brien, Jan Hardenbergh, Bill Place, Jody Kablack, Jim Fitzgerald (Traffic Solutions)

ABSENT: Rich Davison, Eva MacNeill

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm.

Larry O'Brien opened the meeting and recapped the June 1 Selectmen's public forum. There were many ideas brought forward – some which had been previously discussed and either incorporated into the designs, or dismissed due to engineering problems or preference. All in all, it was a very productive discussion with the traffic engineer and the public. It seems that the direction the Selectmen want to proceed with is a minimalist approach that can be funded with Chapter 90 funds. Mr. O'Brien noted that what the Board of Selectmen now needs is a good, salient recommendation from the SCIAC so that a design can be completed and the intersection fixed.

Jody Kablack handed out a copy of all the comments received at the June 1 meeting, as well as a June 13, 2010 letter from First Parish.

Next each representative was asked if their groups had any specific comments or positions on the plans, or any general comments to guide the committee. Frank Riepe, representing the Historic Districts Commission, said he had no report as the HDC has no specific plan to comment on. Jim Hodder, representing the Historical Commission, reported that his committee members have varying opinions on the town center, but no stated position of the commission as a whole. Jody Kablack did add that several members of the Historical Commission have commented that if the No Name road is removed, additional traffic will be forced to enter the intersection, bringing more traffic in close proximity to the Hosmer House, which has experienced structural damage due vibrations caused by vehicles. Deborah Kruskal, representing First Parish, spoke briefly about the June 13, 2010 letter from First Parish to the Selectmen indicating that a second congregational vote was taken in June 2010 indicating that "First Parish is willing to consider proposals from the Town that would include paving land on Hudson Road and making changes to the Common to improve pedestrian safety and to improve the lane alignment on Route 27, but not add new lanes north of the intersection on Concord Road, and with the result that there would be no more than 3 lanes on Route 27." J. Kablack asked for clarification if it would be acceptable to move the pavement closer to the First Parish property line, so long as there was no expansion of pavement or the number of lanes. The indication was that this may be acceptable, however without a specific plan, this could not be verified.

Options on the intersection design were then discussed. J. Kablack broke the process down into 7 different parts, which were discussed individually.

1. Keep configuration similar or propose a different configuration – rotary, offset T, etc:

The SCIAC agreed that a similar configuration is the preferred option. This opinion was also expressed at the June 1, 2010 meeting with the Board of Selectmen by the majority of residents who attended.

2. Improve traffic flow or Improve safety only:

The SCIAC agreed that safety improvements were paramount. Better alignment of the roads in both directions, as well as new signals which will have left turn arrows instead of just delays, will greatly improve safety of the intersection and improve flow slightly. Pedestrian improvements will be in any plan. In order to improve traffic flow, additional lanes must be created, particularly on Concord Road southbound and Hudson Road eastbound. First Parish is against the Concord Rd expansion. In reviewing the traffic volume data for the year 2029 (20 year build out), there is only a slight increase in traffic projected (less than or up to 1% increase). Therefore, if the Town can live with the traffic queues experienced currently, it will not get much worse over the years, and will be slightly improved due to the new signals. A question was asked if we do not improve traffic flow, will we reduce safety? Jim Fitzgerald responded that a reduction in safety will really only be experienced if there are increased violations by impatient people waiting in the long queues. This can be mitigated with longer yellow light sequences. A question was asked regarding the signal phasing and how it will work. Jim Fitzgerald responded that the new signals will be detection actuated during non-peak times (peak times are also detection actuated, but since there will always be activity in the intersection during peak times, the lights will change consistently). The SCIAC agreed that the minor improvements made will make the flow easier and increase safety, but will not sacrifice any of the historical nature of the area.

3. Signals with mast arms or post mounted lights installed on a combination of islands/corners:

The SCIAC vastly preferred post mounted signals. It was discussed that a visibility analysis would need to be completed by Traffic Solutions to ensure correct placement of the posts, as signal visibility was identified as one of the safety problems in the intersection. Each approach needs to have 2 signals within the cone of vision. Traffic Solutions plans address post mounted signals in concrete traffic islands wherever needed. Some corner posts will also be acceptable. It was agreed that the minimum number of traffic islands is preferred.

4. Close the No Name Road; Keep it open in both directions; Keep it open northbound only; Keep it open southbound only:

Traffic volume numbers using this roadway segment framed the discussion. It is a very small percentage of the total traffic in the intersection and doesn't make much difference in the operation of the intersection whether it remains open or closed. This is clearly an aesthetic issue. Comments from the committee included: keeping the road open presents opportunities for visitors to stop in the center and experience it; the No Name Road is the actual historic road and should stay open from a historical perspective; closing it and connecting the space to the front of Town Hall can create better use of the area for gatherings, etc.; keeping it open and leaving the configuration of the intersection exactly like it is negates the work of the SCIAC over the past 4 years – we need to recommend a bigger change; closing it removes any parking for the Town

Clerk's office in the front of the building; internal circulation for Town Hall parking will need to be looked at in more detail before it is designed.

After much discussion, the SCIAC agreed that a compromise position is to keep the No Name Road open as a one-way, northbound only road, and to treat the pavement differently (bricks, cobblestones or some alternative surface) so that it appears to be part of the open space of the common. This area can then be closed off for occasions. There should be a truck restriction on it during open periods (no trucks). Some parking should be accommodated in the front of Town Hall.

5. Close driveway in front of Town Hall and landscape or Keep it open:

Given the decision to keep the No Name Road open, this driveway conflicts with that road and creates circulation conflicts. The SCIAC agreed that the driveway in front of Town Hall should be closed, however some parking for the Town Clerk's office should be provided in this area.

6. Construct 2 lanes southbound on Concord Rd (left/straight and right) or just keep as 1 lane (all directions):

As this is the foundation of First Parish's recommendation, the SCIAC agreed to have only 1 lane southbound on Concord Road. This leg of the intersection will have the greatest impact on traffic flow, as adding a right turn lane onto Hudson Road could alleviate some of the back up during peak periods. It had been previously discussed to only create the second lane for approximately 150 feet from the intersection so that the 2nd lane ended before the First Parish driveway, however that idea was rejected by First Parish as well.

7. Construct 3 lanes eastbound on Hudson Road or keep as existing 2 lanes (right/straight and left):

It was agreed by the SCIAC that 2 lanes eastbound on Hudson Road would be adequate, with the 2 lanes beginning at Peakham Road and widening the road slightly to increase the lane width. In addition, a pedestrian traffic island will be constructed at the corner to relieve right turns slightly before they get to the intersection.

This concluded the Options discussion of the agenda. A narrative report will be written by J. Kablack and circulated to the SCIAC for comments before sharing it with the Selectmen. Ultimately, the decision on how to proceed will be the Selectmen's. Any decision should include discussions with First Parish, however it appears that if the recommendations of the SCIAC are taken, they should be satisfied. Once a decision is made, a design plan can be generated by Traffic Solutions. Cost estimates and funding discussions will be held until a plan is created. It is hoped that a decision can be made to finalize a design so that construction can begin in late spring of 2011.

The minutes of Dec. 2, 2008 and March 22, 2010 were approved.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm.