

Members Present: Bernardine Hoard, Bruce Mello, Stan Noga, Dorothy Maggio

Others Present: Beatrice Birch, Barbara Bourne, Joanne Staats, Tom Staats, Pat Noga, David Parker Jr., Lester D. Rink, Randy Levette, Kim Rink, Wayne Winot, Mike Staats, Mark Bills, Mike Winot, Jim Rogers, Ernest Martian, Tom Kavet, Guy Tanza and Evan Chadwick Esq.

1. Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 9:02 a.m. by Bernardine Hoard, Chair
2. Purpose of the Meeting: This meeting is a warned hearing regarding the classification of Greer Road in Brookline.
3. Disclosure: Stan Noga disclosed at the start of the meeting that he lives on a private road and has participated in the reclassification of another road in the past. Jim Rogers asked that Stan Noga recuse himself from participating in this hearing. Mr. Noga recused himself.
4. The chair addressed the members of the public present and offered the floor to the land owners first. The representative for the Rinks began by referring to the site visit minutes from June 2014 at Greer Road. Greer road is reported as a class 3 road which is out of standard. It has a reduced weight limit of 8,000 lbs. on the bridge that crosses the stream. The compromise discussed in June of 2014 which included improving the bridge so that it can have a higher weight limit, and improving about 150 feet to the class 3 standard while leaving the remaining road class 4 was acceptable. It was important to be able to access the land with a brush truck in case of a fire. A google map was presented to show the land beyond the bridge had no other access except for a discontinued road from the Townshend side. There are inherent liabilities for the town in the case of a building fire, a forest fire or if a vehicle falls through the bridge.

In 2014 Town Meeting the vote for \$100,000.00 to bring the road up to standard was not passed. The Rink family representative stated that the suggested compromise is acceptable. He also noted that the town could apply for a bridge grant which would cover 90% of the cost of replacing the bridge so that it meets a class 3 standards for the road. He also said that he was aware that such a grant might be years away because Brookline has been given grants for other bridges recently and the town would not be high on the list for another bridge grant. Options suggested would be to install a temporary bridge until a bridge grant would be available.
5. Land owners Tom Kavet and his wife Bea spoke as land owners with an interest to see that the access to their land would be safely addressed. They both agreed that the compromise of an improved bridge and a turnaround would be sufficient. Mr. Kavet understands that budgets are tight, a highway is not needed but the 8k lbs. bridge limit needed to be addressed. Bea spoke of the temporary logging bridge on Parkers land and said she would agree to the town building a turnaround beyond the bridge as discussed previously as the compromise.

6. David Parker Jr. spoke as a land owner. The land owned by David and his sister (about 700 acres) some of which is in Townshend, is accessible to them without Greer Road being improved. Mr. Parker stated that he felt that in terms of cost, the entire road was never up to the class 3 standards and that the board should consider where to spend money that would most benefit the public good. He felt that other infrastructure improvements needs to be addressed before Greer Road. Much of Vermont is not accessible as about 75% of the State is forested. Reclassification of the entire road as a Class 4 would mean that no state bridge grant money would be available, but the town could improve the area and fix the bridge for much less money.
7. The representative for the Rink Family asked for a point of clarification. He stated that the bridge itself needs to follow the hydrolytic standards. Those standards are unique to each bridge. The standards are written is such a way that any bridge can be installed as long as it meets the loosely tailored standards. If the entire road is reclassified as a class 4, then the project is entirely the town's responsibility for its cost. The potential liability increases with the class 4 road.
8. Bruce Mello said that the town would not install a substandard bridge. Reducing the costs would not mean that the town would allow a poorly constructed bridge to be installed.
9. Mr. Parker said that two Cersossomo Bridges for logging were installed on his land in the matter of two days which would support 80K lbs. of weight. These bridges are not substandard.
10. The Rinks representative said that using skidder bridges for access across the stream until a bridge grant became available would be acceptable. He also said that many towns have a class 4 maintenance policy and suggested that the town of Brookline adopt one as well so that each class 4 road is maintained to the same standards.
11. Mark Bills, the road foreman was asked about the maintenance of the other class 4 road in town. The difference is that the other road does not have a bridge. Gravel is added as needed and water bars prevent eroding on the steep incline. Greer Road is hard to get gravel up on it so it has no surface gravel applied to the road surface. The Log stringers on the bridge are a species of locus but Mark does not know the age or the strength of the stringers that is why the weight limit was reduced to 8K lbs. Class 4 roads are passable with a vehicle with higher ground clearance.
12. Jim Rogers spoke next and he reminded the board that when he was the road commissioner he researched a timber fame bridge design that would be approval by state standards that would cost the town about \$30,000.00. He also said that if the area was kept as a class 3, the bridge would get state inspections every 2 years. As a class 4 area, the town would be responsible to hire an engineer for those inspections. Also, the modern standards would require the installation of a rub rain and a pedestrian rail because the drop is over 6 feet.

13. Stan Noga, speaking as a taxpayer asked Mr. Martian to clarify his position. He asked “are you saying you don’t see the need to maintain Greer Road if Grassy Brook Road is not maintained. “ Mr. Martian said that the dirt part of GBR cannot be traveled at the posted speed limit of 35 mph. It was noted that mud season requires the road to dry out and that it will improve as the season advances.
14. The attorney for the Rinks added that not much maintenance was ever done on Greer Road over the years because the family didn’t make requests in the past from the town. The reason that this is now before the current select board is because the Rinks did ask recently for work to be done, that is when the engineer was called in and the bridge concerns came forward. Mr. Noga added that the road was never a class 3. The town did not cause it to deteriorate.
15. Tom Staats, former road commissioner spoke about the historical research on the classification of Greer Road. He discussed how in 1973 the road was classified as Class 4 due to Act 63. The discussion continued to how in 1974 the town asked the state to inspect the road and issue a provisional class 3 status. Investment over a period of years to improve the road would have to follow. The town no longer keeps records on the amount of money spent on all roads from 1974 to 1981. Mr. Staats stated that it would be an unfair use of his tax dollars to improve this road to class 3. It was never legally a class 3 and should be considered class 4. The town did not do the improvements and the status of class 3 should not have been recorded on the highway mileage certificates. Greer road is known as TH #5 and is .35 miles long. He feels that it is time to right a wrong and to classify the road as a Class 4 and to maintain it an according to the level of current use and to address the bridge and its antique abutments.
16. A question was asked about the tax rate/ assessment values for land on class 3 vs class 4 roads. The tax rate is the same for all lands in Brookline (1.62). Land on black tom vs. land accessed on a private road may be assessed lower by 5 to 7% but not taxed lower.
17. Barbara Bourne spoke from the planning commission with a concern about using state money/grants to improve a bridge to nowhere.
18. Jim Rogers said that no one is asking to keep the hill as a class 3. With about 4 “ of gravel on the 150 feet beyond the bridge it could be safe and passable for access.
19. David Parker Jr. noted that the State of Vermont does not have money to kick in on a project like this with limited use.
20. The lawyer for the Rinks asked that an inquiry be made via an application. If the application is denied than it would be a class 4 without any question.
21. Mr. Staats reminded those present of the failing culverts that may need to be converted to bridges in the future and that grant money should be conserved to benefit the majority of the people in town. Beatrice Birch suggested we lie low and get the bridge fixed without State help.

22. If a grant is applied for and given, the town does not have to accept the grant. It was also mentioned that the town should contact the State to get an engineer over to look at the bridge to save approximately \$1500.00 engineering fee. They are in the area and may come over and give a free report.

Bernardine asked if there were any other comments...hearing none she indicated that a decision would be made on May 16, 2015 at 9 am at town hall.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:30 a.m.

Final submitted by Dorothy Maggio with corrections.