

Meeting Notes July 31, 2014
Town of Eliot Pleasant Street Drainage and Right of Way Improvements

Town Staff (Kate Pelletier and Joel Moulton), Kristie Rabasca (Integrated Environmental), Steve Bradstreet (Ransom Consulting Engineers) and Barry Hosmer (Landscape Architect) met with residents of Pleasant Street to discuss a drainage project and improvements to a Town right of way at the intersection of Pleasant Street and Riverside Avenue. After feedback received from a meeting October 26, 2013 (26 households were invited, 11 people attended representing 7 households, 10 households returned surveys), the Town applied for and received a grant to improve the access to the Piscataqua River in this area. Of the 10 households that replied to the survey 8 indicated they would like to see improved access to the water.

At the July 31, 2014 meeting, approximately 30 residents attended. The meeting lasted from approximately 6:35 until 7:45. No boundary survey had been completed of the area, and the purpose of this meeting was to discuss the drainage improvements planned, and to gain feedback on the type of improvements the residents would like to see, and to hear any concerns about the project. The following feedback was provided:

Project General Comments: A revised information gathering survey will be provided to residents because several claimed not to have received the notice of the meeting or the survey in October and they would like to provide input. The survey will be posted on the Town website. Several residents expressed an interest in receiving a survey in the mail and provided their names and addresses on paper. The mailing list used for both the July 31, 2014 and October 26, 2013 meetings is attached, and shows notes as to whether the residents attended in October, which residents provided surveys in October, and whether the addresses used for the October and July notices were correct. (all residents invited in October were invited in July except that two additional people were invited in July (one whose address is currently listed as North Berwick) and two households whose owners have changed since October).

A few residents spoke in favor of the project, that it would be a benefit to the neighborhood, could help to increase property values, and allow emergency responders better access to the River. One resident stated that he has used the right of way as a launch for a small boat for many years and would like to continue to do so. This resident asked for a show of hands as to who had used the right of way for walking access to the water. Many residents raised their hands. He then asked who had used the right of way as a launch for small craft. Four or 5 residents raised their hands. This question will be repeated in the survey for formal documentation.

A resident asked about Town rules for public access. Generally, public parks and places are accessible from dawn to dusk. Kate Pelletier will confirm for next meeting. Kate Pelletier will also confirm parking restrictions for next meeting.

Traffic, Trash and Parking Concerns: A few residents again expressed their concerns that improvements to the right of way would increase traffic in the area and increase parking on the road. Some stated that they would object to placing signs notifying others of the parking restrictions. One resident stated that some users of the right of way have left trailers parked near the water on her private property. One resident stated that passers by already drive too fast. Another resident stated that the Harbormaster is conducting a survey of the moorings that are being accessed to ensure they are all legal.

These residents expressed concerns that the Police Department would not be able to respond to the traffic and parking concerns.

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A resident expressed their concerns about increased trash.

Survey questions: One (or more) residents stated that the right of way was not a right of way, rather it was an easement from the two parcels located on either side (Lots 3-32 and 3-7-1) granted to the Town for access to the water. One resident asked what the date was for the most recent survey on record. The project team did not know. A formal boundary survey will be conducted by the project team as soon as possible.

One resident asked if the entire street could be looked at, because portions of the guard rail are in poor condition, and a full road reconstruction should be conducted. The project was not scoped for full road reconstruction.

A few residents asked why the drainage project was required.

Next Steps: The informational survey will be sent out again (paper to select residents, others can access it from the Planning Department website. All should fill out survey and send back as soon as possible.

A boundary survey will also be conducted to confirm whether or not the Town owns the right of way.

Assuming the boundary survey shows the Town owns the right of way, and water access improvements can be made:

If the informational survey shows clear majority wants improved access for foot traffic only, Steve Bradstreet and Barry will move forward with 2-3 sketches showing what that access could look like.

If the informational survey shows clear majority wants improved access for foot traffic and small craft access to the water, Steve Bradstreet and Barry will move forward with 2-3 sketches showing what that access could look like.

If the informational survey shows clear majority does NOT want any kind of improved access, Steve Bradstreet and Barry will move forward with a design for only the drainage portion of the project.

If survey is close to 50/50. Town staff will make a decision based on comments received on survey.

Regardless of the outcomes of the boundary survey and the informational survey, one additional meeting will be held in late August or Early September to provide the results of the informational and boundary surveys. If improved access will become part of the project, the meeting will also be used to obtain feedback on the sketches.