**BRANDON AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

**SPECIAL MEETING ABOUT THE "CULVERT PROJECT"**

**OCTOBER 18, 2016**

Present: Bernie Carr, Kathy Rausenberger, Maria Ammatuna, Steven Zorn, Wendy Bizzarro, Richard Baker, Seth Hopkins, Gene Pagano, Jim Leary, AnnMarie Roth, Nancy Leary, Karen Desabrais, Dave Atherton, Ellen Walter, Dolores Furnari, Doug Bailey, Line Barral, Brandi Quenneville, Tiffany Quesnel, Brian Coolidge, Louis Pattis, Eryn & Andy Doaner, Bill Moore, Tom Markowski, Dave Markowski

The meeting was called to order at 6:33 pm by Bernie Carr.

Bernie said "Let's Be Positive"

Dave Markowski said the project is primarily being funded by FEMA. It is separate from the Route 7 upgrade. This project is necessary to be completed prior to the rest of the Route 7 upgrade. The bid came out in August. Markowski Excavating was the successful bidder. They had to divert the Neshobe River away from their work area and barricade the area off for pedestrians. He said they understand it curtails people's ability to freely walk.

D Markowski said this is a huge piece of concrete. There are 28 sections of concrete that will be placed across Route 7. They have to excavate as deep as 24 feet. The inside structure is 12' wide and minimum 6' high. They have to allow for the thickness of the concrete, a foot on each side and room for the concrete people to pour the footings.

D Markowski said they had to competitively bid this based on what they saw in the bid documents, plans, and specifications written by the design engineers. Conditions change and there could be alterations. They have until the end of April to complete this but they want to expedite it and finish earlier. He invited business people to come to them with ideas and work together. He said they have been working with the town on extra signage.

D Markowski said they need room to work. They are happy to be able to maintain two lanes of traffic. This is a heavily traveled portion of Route 7. He said they can't do anything about the room needed to work. Large machines are coming in. It will be an inconvenience.

D Markowski said a lot of their work is scheduling. They have to bring in equipment. They have to go to the State for special permits to bring in some equipment. There could be a day where they are just setting up equipment. He cautioned that as bad as it seems now, this is just a part of what will be coming in the next three years. He thinks with the right mindset and attitude it will be fine. They want to work with the business community.

Ellen Walter said she was startled by the green fencing in front of Mae's, the sandwich shop, and Blue Moon. She asked if the green could come down. D Markowski said there are some reasons for it. It is for safety. There will be rock flying once they start breaking up rock. The fence delineates the project. Tom Markowski said it is something to bring up to the engineers. He will follow up.

Steven Zorn asked about crosswalks. He said there is a big sign in front of Found Objects that directs people to park behind the Mobil station. He said it would help for a crosswalk to be there. Bernie Carr said when the crosswalks were last painted, the wrong one was painted. They painted the one put in after Irene instead of the one at the town offices. He said that one has the best sight lines in both directions. D Markowski asked if the town would be willing to repaint that one and Atherton said yes. It was noted that the wrong one should be painted over to avoid confusion.

Line Barral asked about the speed limit. Atherton said they just got 15 mph signs which will be going up and the speed limit will be enforced. Carr asked if there will be "fines doubled in work zones" and D Markowski said that was not requested for the signs. He said it is the town's option. Carr said he would talk to Chief Brickell about policing there and showing a presence so people will take it seriously that they need to slow down.

AnnMarie Roth said she is a tenant in the Leary Block and one of her big concerns is the noise from the construction. Her work is in healing and she needs to have a peaceful environment. She said she can be flexible in arranging client hours and asked if businesses could be informed in advance of work hours involving loud noise. D Markowski explained that when they excavated, they have found huge discrepancies in what was reported and what is there. It all has to come up. He said they made a major investment to provide a machine that will minimize the time it takes to break the rock. But there will be noise. There will be boxes of styrofoam earplugs available for people in the area. He said the noise will not happen every day or not for entire days. It might be hard to have a schedule for when they will be making a lot of noise. Roth asked Markowski's regular work hours and D Markowski said usually 7 am - 5 pm, possibly 4 pm when it gets darker. Roth asked about communication and D Markowski said he or T Markowski will be on the site just about all the time. They do not plan to work weekends and hope to break up the action during the holidays. Roth said she can shift to weekends and D Markowski said they do not anticipate working any weekends as long as they are on schedule. D Markowski said they will exchange information in order to stay in touch with Roth.

Maria Ammatuna asked if the Chamber could look into the potential of business interruption insurance. Louis Pattis said maybe the town could help businesses that are really impacted; possibly helping to arrange credit lines. This is going to be hard on businesses for years and it will be tough to lose even one business. Carr asked Wendy Bizzarro if she could talk with the credit union and see if there could be any kind of low-interest help for businesses. She said she would look into it. Doug Bailey said the town has a small revolving loan fund but that isn't going to keep everyone afloat. Carr said maybe some of the local banks have something. Bill Moore said he could talk with REDC to see if they have any funds.

Gene Pagano asked about adding a few parking spaces in front of the Leary Block or Gourmet. He said he was watching the traffic flow and saw a few cars parked in front of Gourmet and the traffic still got through, even a truck. He asked if the fence and barricades could be moved over four or five feet to take the sharp bend out and move the line in order to make three or four parking spaces. D Markowski explained when they were setting up the traffic last Wednesday night, they were supposed to be 4' closer to the existing side lines. He said they gave Route 7 two foot wider lanes than what was designed. There was a design radius that went toward the falls and they moved in the barricades. There were a few tractor trailers coming through when they were setting up and they saw they needed to do that. Pagano said if they could move in another three to four feet and put in three or four parking spaces that would help. He also recommended taking down the tree in front of Blue Moon, since it will come down during Segment 6 anyway. D Markowski said all the trees are coming down during Segment 6. He said they will ask the engineers. Carr said the sidewalks are wide and maybe they could take a little off the sidewalk. D Markowski said for permanent parking needed during the day, they filled in the section besides Blue Moon to get in their sand bags. He said perhaps they can fill on the other side of the sidewalk to get in a parking space. It could be a safety issue. Carr asked about nosing in toward the falls. Pagano said on Monday there were three cars there and traffic got through. Barral said there was a bus unloading there. It was noted that they either need to make the road really narrow or provide parking spaces. It is dangerous now. D Markowski said they will look into it. Seth Hopkins asked if it would help to put in a fog line. D Markowski said they put in markings based on the documents. Maybe the assumption was the existing curb was going to be the imitation fog line. He said they have to look at it for options to get something in that corner.

Bizzarro asked about the parking behind the Mobil station and about where people are supposed to park. She said it was hard to know, especially with big equipment there. Atherton said the Town is working on that area this week. They are putting up more signs to show the public parking area. The Town will put a barrier fence around the perimeter. It will not be paved this year. Atherton said there is one light now. He will look into more. He said the Town put up a lot of signs to show there is public parking behind Café Provence. People didn't know it was public. Moore suggested business owners park behind Mobil and leave parking behind Café for customers. Carr said maybe there could be signage on the Thomas Overlook railing showing what businesses are available.

There was a question about who was going to do snow removal at the Thomas Overlook. Atherton said it is the town's responsibility. D Markowski said they could also help with snow removal and also on sidewalks.

Jim Leary said he hopes the work crews patronize the downtown businesses and that they park their trucks off-street. D Markowski said his crews are instructed to park behind the Mobil station. He said sometimes someone pulls in for a short period of time but for any length of time, they park down. Atherton said he asked town employees to park behind the Mobil station. He suggested allowing parking in front of the town hall for handicapped parking for people going into downtown. He said he has a meeting with the engineers tomorrow morning and discussion will be about parking spaces in front of the Leary's building.

Pattis offered parking behind the Brandon Inn for downtown employees. He does not want signs saying it is public parking, but there are spaces available in the back. Ammatuna said there is a lot of parking around the corner that no one is using. Lake Sunapee Bank employees are parking on the curve by the cemetery. Carr suggested they could be asked to park behind the Inn.

Ammatuna had suggestions about decorating for the holidays and about Moonlight Madness. Maybe decorating the fence? Running a shuttle? She asked Markowski's for a hardhat for her window.

Carr suggested the Town talk to Brent Wetmore about delineating some public parking on his lot. There was discussion and counting. A total of 14 parking spaces have been eliminated at this time.

Atherton said when this side of the project is complete, they hope to gain back the four spaces in front of Mae's and the sandwich shop. Carr said people think parking behind the Mobil Station might be far but people walk longer distances in a mall; just not in a downtown. Brent's is right in the middle of town. Atherton said it can be discussed with him.

Walter said she is in favor of having the tree removed in front of Blue Moon. Daryl is aware.

Barral asked about the timeline for moving to the other side of the street. T Markowski said they won't know until they dig. A lot depends on the rock. D Markowski said they are bringing in the largest hydraulic hammer that this manufacturer makes. It will be a big machine and will need a lot of room. There will be traffic pattern changes during the course of the project. At one time, traffic might flow as an island in the middle. They don't have any timeline as of now.

Bailey said that Election Day is November 8 and voting is in the Town Hall. He said there will be many extra cars in town that day. VOTE NOW.

There was discussion about the hours of Moonlight Madness. Nancy Leary said it will be important to have as much parking as possible that day. Carr said they are trying to organize a shuttle. Moore said behind the Mobil station will be improved with better lighting.

J Leary said perhaps the Town could relax the sign ordinance for downtown businesses during this time. Carr said the Town has been putting up signs. Eryn Doaner said every request she has made has been met within a half-hour. She said it is appreciated. She said Markowski's has been accommodating. There was discussion about the orange signs; they look like construction signs. Andy Doaner said if they were off the green fence, that would help. E Doaner said if the signs were in a different color and if they could be repositioned, she thinks it would be be helpful for Mae's and the sandwich shop.

Ammatuna said there seems to be a problem with delivery trucks going to the restaurants in the morning. There was discussion about the time, location, scheduling, etc. No real answers.

Zorn requested an orange sign for Found Objects. Carr said Daryl should be able to get him one.

D Markowski suggested possibly putting business logos on signs that could be fastened to a railing or fence. Atherton said the signs are not cheap. Carr said people are driving through a new and different pattern and can't look at all the signs. A. Doaner said the sign by the fence looks like a construction sign.

D Markowski said his business is required to have orange signs.

N Leary said for Segment 6, there will be someone designated to work with the business community to help keep businesses alive, help with deliveries, provide communication, etc. Businesses will need to survive a two year project, not just six months. She said with this project, what the engineer left out was "the impact." It was a surprise to everyone. Atherton said with Segment 6 there will be temporary ingress / egress, they will have to maintain temporary drives. All the businesses will have temporary drives to get into buildings and the Town has been putting that in deeds. He said the plans for Segment 6 have been in the Town Office for over a year. But they do not address deliveries. But there has to be a temporary egress / ingress into buildings.

Carr said the Chamber will have a lot of meetings, barn raisings, etc. He said with the previous water project from two years ago, the contractor was McDonald and they did a great job with communication. N Leary suggested putting together an email list to provide information on the culvert project -- letting merchants know what is happening each week, when there will be lane shifts, etc. Carr said there is a press release from DuBois & King (the engineers) and an every-other-week meeting. T Markowski said they could provide a schedule for the upcoming two weeks. They provide for the engineer a bar graph but they could provide an explanation in words. D Markowski asked T Markowski to put something together every week for Carr, who will distribute.

Bailey said communication is key. Everyone knows this project has to happen and was going to happen, but it was still a surprise. The Chamber could help with communication and that would take less time than everyone trying to talk over the fence [to the contractor]. T Markowski said he has sent schedules to the engineer but he doesn't know where it goes from there. Bailey said there should be communication from the project to the Chamber, who will send to the businesses. Carr said one of the engineers from DuBois & King is joining the Chamber board so that could also help. D Markowski explained that everything they do has to come from the engineers. Markowski follows the documents. The engineers have to approve changes. Setting up a communication chain will be further discussed at the meeting tomorrow with the engineer.

Walter asked what it will look like when they move to the other side of the street [Blue Moon]. D Markowski said they can provide what it will look like but it is subject to change because of site conditions. He said they have taken from their work space to help alleviate some of the impact on downtown customers. He said he understands that merchants want some alterations and they will work on their end to see if they could accommodate that.

Atherton said for the past four years, the "Bridge 114 - Segment 6 - Culvert" has been an agenda item for every Selectboard meeting. He said these projects are discussed at every meeting. He said there is very low attendance at meetings. However, when the contractor showed up, everyone was surprised. The Town has been discussing it for four years at Selectboard meetings. Atherton invited people to Selectboard meetings and also to look at the project plans that are in the Town Office conference room. D Markowski reminded folks that what they are seeing now is a portion of the entire Route 7 upgrade project.

Pattis said the water line project [of two years ago] went very smoothly. There was someone assigned to the project to work with the businesses and the contractor was very approachable. Good communication and a weekly meeting helped.

Carr said the barrels, planters & trash cans in front of the Town Office that delineate the road from the sidewalk block the view coming off West Seminary. People do U-turns there. The traffic is close. He asked if the barrels could be switched to the long sawhorses to protect the area and give better sight view. D Markowski said the engineer would have to approve the change. There are highway safety specs for barricades and signage. Bailey said during construction, U-turns there should be discouraged. Carr said that won't happen. Moore said after Segment 6, that U-turn won't be there anymore. Carr said it has been there for a hundred years.

Carr said he has questions from folks that emailed him:

Why the orange tree wrappings? They are ugly. Carr said the trees don't need to be protected, they are coming down. Atherton said that is a question for the engineer meeting tomorrow.

Perhaps some signs in big windows could go up saying that this project will help protect Brandon from future floods like Irene.

Coming out of the alley behind Café is very unsafe. Perhaps this needs to be made into a right-turn-only. J Leary said it is dangerous to exit from there and suggested a crosswalk coming out of there. Ammatuna said when she was on the Selectboard, they were told they can't put a crosswalk there because it does not meet slope safety standards. Carr suggested signs on the brickwork or signs for pedestrians and drivers to be careful. The road is closer to the sidewalk now and people need to know they are stepping into diverted traffic.

Thanks to Dave and Tom Markowski for coming tonight. D Markowski said they are here to do a quality job for Brandon. They need to watch out for safety and businesses' success. He said he believes this is good money being invested to make a better Brandon, one of the best attractions on this side of the Green Mountains.

Atherton said his office is open if people want to talk. He has a direct line to the engineers.

Bailey said people should look at the plans for Segment 6. How will it affect businesses? It has been in the making for 20 years.

Atherton said Segment 6 will be a two year project but it will be segmented. There will be resident engineers on the site all the time. The firm that did the water project two years ago did very well.

Moore said the Segment 6 plans are on the Town website.

N Leary asked if Segment 6 includes some nighttime work. Atherton said it is being discussed.

Meeting closed at 7:55 pm.

Faithfully yours,

Janet