

Final Report – Sunset Committee – December 14, 2016

The ad-hoc Sunset Committee is pleased to present its final report of our activities to the Chebeague Island Board of Selectmen. We are confident that the Board will use this information to help build a transportation plan for the Island.

In addition to this report, the Sunset Committee is submitting the following to the Board of Selectmen:

- Copies of all meeting minutes
- A summary of meetings
- PowerPoint copies of two of the public presentations
- The Request for Proposal issued to vendors
- Original proposals by vendors
- Communication with the Board of Selectmen during the study period
- Final study reports
- Background information from Town of Cumberland
- Location of Paper Streets provided by the surveyor (approximate except for Elizabeth Street)
- Interim reports from Milone & MacBroom
- Copies of plans, maps, etc.
- Numerous emails between Committee members and the vendor related to the studies and project

Executive Summary

During the last three years the Sunset Committee has met 35 times, held three public meetings, and overseen eight studies of land and water. We secured a \$20,000 grant to reduce the Town's expense for all these studies to \$31,747.87.

The result of this extensive work was the answer to the first question that we asked – “Is the property suited for numerous development options, including a landing and parking lot?” The answer is yes. Now the Town must use that information to move forward with studying possible alternatives for the property.

Conducting a public survey without providing estimates of cost would be unfair to the public and the Sunset Committee does not have the funding to obtain cost estimates.

The Sunset Committee's recommendation is that the Board of Selectmen creates a Transportation Committee that evaluates the Stone Wharf, Sunset Landing, and Bennett's Cove. The goal of the evaluation would be to develop the best long range plan for the transportation needs of the Island. The Transportation Committee would obtain site plans and costs for different alternatives. Plans would include solving the parking issue as well. When there have been “apples to apples” comparisons made the alternatives should be taken to the public for a decision.

Background

The Board of Selectmen created the Sunset Committee on 9/13/2013 with a three year term and the following task list.

- a) Evaluate the Town property shown on the tax maps as Map I5 Lot 9 commonly known as Sunset Landing and develop a long range plan for the property that best serves the Chebeague community.
- b) Develop a research plan in conjunction with the Board of Selectmen.
- c) Hold public meetings to solicit input from the community.
- d) Involve committees, organizations and other interested parties in all phases of the plan development and implementation.

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- e) Submit interim plans to the Capital Planning and Finance committee and the Board of Selectmen by its regular December meeting of each year for the purpose of raising and/or expending funds in the following fiscal year.
- f) Submit the long range plan to the Board of Selectmen who shall bring it before Town Meeting for adoption.

(Note: At its March 9, 2016 meeting, the Board of Selectmen reduced the scope of the Sunset Committee's charge without prior consultation with the Committee. The Board instructed the Sunset Committee to conduct a community survey and submit a final report without a long range plan or further studies.)

The first several months were extremely busy for the Sunset Committee. It met with an engineering firm; developed and mailed RFPs to eight prospective vendors; received proposals from five firms; selected three firms for presentations; attended presentations (the Board of Selectmen were invited to attend the presentations and grade the vendors along with the Sunset Committee); and submitted its recommendation for a plan and vendor to the BoS. The BoS approved the research plan and vendor recommendation at their March 26, 2014 meeting.

The project's first goal was to determine the property's limitations, if any, on various uses of the property. In order to make this determination, a number of studies of both the land and water needed to be conducted. The work was divided into three phases:

Research Plan

With the help of consultants, the Committee developed a research plan that would evaluate the site's potential. The BoS approved this plan.

Phase One: Conduct studies of the land. At the conclusion, hold a public meeting to report results

- Boundary/Topographic Survey
- Wetlands Delineation
- Vernal Pool Assessment
- Archeological Study

Phase Two: Conduct studies of the water and follow-up on Archeological study. At the conclusion hold a public meeting to report results

- Prehistoric Archeological Investigation
- Eelgrass Survey
- Bathymetric Survey
- Wind and Wave Analysis

Phase Three: Solicit public input and develop a best use plan for the property

Funding

Phase One Contract amount was \$16,500

The Committee received funding for Phase One as follows:

-\$10,000 from Paper Streets Capital Fund (see 3/12/2014 BoS minutes)

The surveyor would combine a survey of the property with a paper streets survey. Unfortunately, the paper streets could not be fully surveyed because an abutting property owner declined access to his property.

-\$5,000 from the Selectmen's Contingency Fund (see 3/12/2014 BoS minutes)

-\$1,500 from Selectmen's Contingency Fund (see 2/26/2014 BoS minutes)

Phase Two Contract amount was \$40,000

The Committee received funding for Phase Two as follows:

-\$20,000 appropriated at Town Meeting 6/7/2014

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-\$20,000 grant from Maine Coastal Program. This application required an \$8,000 match from the town that was not made.

Therefore the total contracted amount was \$55,500. The Town Administrator reports that the Committee has expended \$51,747.87 to date (\$31,747.87 were town funds and a \$20,000 was a grant).

In summary, eight studies were conducted at an average cost of just under \$6,500 each. The total cost included several meetings with the vendor as well as two public meetings conducted by the vendor. It also included the development of an “existing conditions plan”.

All of these studies were needed in order to be confident that the site was suitable for a ferry landing or other types of development. Only when that question was answered could the Town pursue a cost/benefit study of the chosen development option.

Communication with the Board of Selectmen

Throughout the Committee’s term it has provided status reports to the Board of Selectmen. A Selectmen and Planning Board representative have sat on the Committee. All meetings have been open to the public and the Selectmen. Please review the material presented for copies of the Committee’s reports to the Board of Selectmen.

Public Access to Committee Activities

- All Sunset Committee meetings were open to the public (the committee has met 35 times)
- Minutes to Sunset Committee meetings were posted on Town’s website
- Presentation at 2014 Town Meeting when \$20,000 in funding was unanimously approved
- Study reports were posted on Town’s website
- Summary report from vendor was posted on Town’s website
- Two public meetings were held for the community reporting study results (one after each phase)
- A public meeting was held in June 2016 to summarize all study results
- All studies, as well as the “Existing Conditions Plan, were presented to the public in a meeting on June 27, 2016. (For more detail, please refer to the June 27, 2016 presentation previously provided to the Board of Selectmen).
- An update of the Committee’s activities was printed in the Island Calendar.

Committee Results

In addition to the individual studies, included in the material submitted are the final report issued by Milone & MacBroom regarding the property (See Chebeague Island Sunset Landing Report – January 31, 2016) and the approved “Existing Conditions Plan” dated March 7, 2016.

The report finds that there are no extenuating circumstance that would preclude the use of the site for various purposes – including development of a wharf and parking lot.

With Phases One and Two completed, the Committee recognized the need to obtain some cost estimates for major alternatives – with ferry landing being the most costly. When the Board of Selectmen decided no further funding would be available, the Committee voted not to do a community survey because the lack of needed information would render the results practically useless.

Outstanding Issues

1. Access to the property must be secured. The BoS assumed responsibility for resolving this issue in January 2015 and is currently negotiating with an abutter on this matter. Further, there is possible access from the end of Elizabeth Street across a paper street known as Old Pier Road on the 1990 Titcomb survey (also referred to as Sunset Avenue on the Sunset Beach 1907 plan). The approved Existing Conditions Plan does not depict this road because the Committee agreed for the sake of simplicity and readability not to show paper streets (other than Elizabeth Road) on the final plan. Several committee members felt Old Pier Road should be depicted because of the access to the Town's property but agreed to remove it in order to move the process forward and with the knowledge that the Old Pier Road was still available to the Town as a Paper Street. If access to the property over the abutter's land is impossible the BoS should reexamine this other possible access. (The Titcomb survey is included with the material presented to the BoS with this report.)
2. The Town must submit a final report to the State for the \$20,000 grant. It also must show how the Town expended the \$8,000 required grant match.

Recommendation

The Board of Selectmen should appoint a Transportation Committee that will address the Island's ferry, parking, barging, commercial fishing, and recreational boating needs for the next 50 years. The Transportation Committee should be tasked with securing comprehensive studies of Sunset, Stone Wharf, and Bennett's Cove that would include site plans and costs. The results should be presented to the public for a decision on the best solution – which would then be implemented by the Town.