

Minutes
Herring River Restoration Committee (HRRC)
Friends of Herring River Office
1580 State Highway Route 6
South Wellfleet, MA 02667
March 18, 2016
9:00-11:00 am

Members Present: Tim Smith, Steve Spear, Peter Herridge, Hillary Greenberg, Gary Joseph

Others Present: Margo Fenn, Don Palladino, Martha Craig, George Price, Chris Rein (by phone), Helen Miranda Wilson

High Toss Road Town Meeting Article:

The Herring River Restoration Committee held a special meeting on March 18, 2016 to consider a recommendation on a petitioned article for the Wellfleet Annual Town Meeting. The article reads:

Article VI-4 To see if the Town will vote to instruct the Board of Selectmen to ensure continued access to Griffin Island over the Town road known as High Toss Bridge Road. Such access shall continue to be open to pedestrian, equine, bicycle and light vehicle and not impeded upon by barriers or tides, or do or act anything thereon.

This petitioned article seeks to retain full access across High Toss Road at all times, for all types of users, including pedestrians, bicycles, horses and motor vehicles.

Background: In June 2015 a public meeting was held to present alternative concepts for High Toss Road to the public. Four alternative concepts were presented:

- A. Complete removal of High Toss Road
- B. A long pedestrian timber boardwalk (either standard timber boardwalk or "deluxe" similar to Uncle Tim's Bridge).
- C. A pile-supported concrete, timber or fiberglass multiple bridge segments and elevated trail segments.
- D. A heavier load multi-use bridge segments and elevated trail segments.

During the public meeting, participants clearly wished to maintain public access to Griffin Island but expressed concerns about building a structure, particularly a long timber boardwalk that would accommodate only pedestrians. Concerns about the structural alternatives (Options B, C and D) included: The environmental impacts of constructing and maintaining chemically-treated wood structures; safety and potential conflicts of use among different users such as pedestrians, vehicles and horses; cost to the town for future maintenance obligations; and changes in the natural environment and quality of life. Participants also noted that Alternative B (the timber boardwalk alternative) would not accommodate equestrian use.

At the June 9, 2015 meeting, the BOS voted "...to eliminate Options B, C and D and direct Friends of Herring River to further explore Option A+" i.e. plans to remove the road with a marsh-level crossing path and a bridge across the river channel. There was a public meeting on February 11, 2016 to present concept plans for a marsh-level crossing across the entire length of the floodplain at High Toss Road, with a timber bridge structure over the main channel of the Herring River. Many attendees at that meeting did not support the proposed approach because it would not provide full access to Griffin Island at all stages of the tide. The Board of Selectmen discussed this plan at its February 23, 2016 meeting, and took additional comments from the public. The Board of Selectmen agreed to delay action on the proposal and encouraged members of the public to provide additional comments.

The Committee discussed the petitioned article and noted that the Herring River marsh plain has subsided by several feet since the diking of Chequessett Neck Road in 1909. In order to accommodate tidal flow and still provide full access for all users at all stages of the tide, the existing road would have to be raised and armored and multiple culverts installed. This would involve considerable wetland filling, which would not likely be permissible under the Town's Wetland Bylaw. It would also be expensive to build and maintain an elevated road and system of culverts. There is no entity in place to maintain these structures.

For these reasons, the Committee did not support the petitioned article. Hillary Greenberg moved, seconded by Steve Spear to not recommend Article VI-4 to Wellfleet Town Meeting. The motion was approved, 5 in favor, none opposed.

The Committee briefly discussed how to provide information to the public prior to Town Meeting. FHR plans to host a meeting on April 14, with a series of presentations about different aspects of the Restoration Project.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:00 am.