

RYE PERKINS ROAD SAFETY COMMITTEE
Meeting

Thursday, April 11, 2019, 6:00 p.m.

Rye Town Hall – 2nd Floor

Voting Members Present: Chairman Gregg Mikolaities, Vice-Chair Mary Westover, Secretary John Bellino, Karin Nelson, and Doug Abrams

Non-voting members Present: Police Chief Kevin Walsh.

Also Present: Tyler McGill, Summer Sessions and Martha Leary, Dunes Hotel

I. Call to Order

Chair Mikolaities called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. Roll Call

The members of the committee introduced themselves.

III. Review Committee Charge

Rye Perkins Road Safety Committee Charge

Charge to the Committee

- 1. Become familiar with Perkins Road and the concerns of its residents regarding beach going motor vehicle traffic in the summertime as it poses a safety risk to residents and pedestrians to include cars speeding, turning around in driveways, executing unsafe U-turns, and parking adjacent to fire hydrants and driveways resulting in unsafe conditions.**
- 2. Meet as necessary to review the Rye Beach Committee's annual reports, recommendations and meeting minutes; Town ordinances and the Tighe and Bond Ocean Boulevard Parking Assessment Study as a basis for providing recommendations and suggestions to the Selectmen for making Perkins Road safer during the summer months, taking into account consideration of any unintended consequences, e.g. a total ban on parking could push parking into other residential neighborhoods and could affect businesses.**

- 3. Produce and present a final report to the Selectmen by April 30 2019, allowing time for the Board to analyze it, develop next steps and implement them prior to beginning of the summer season.**

The Rye Perkins Road Committee shall follow the Rules of Procedure for Committees established by the Board of Selectmen.

IV. Review and approval of April 4, 2019 minutes

- Minutes to remain in draft form.

V. Chief Walsh update to the Committee

Chief Walsh reported that he, Dennis McCarthy and Paul Paradis, from DPW, went to the site near the Dunes on Perkins Road. They looked at some of the concerns that Mrs. Leary and Summer Sessions had in regards to some of the ideas the committee discussed. From the Dunes to the telephone pole, there will be two, possibly three, posts. The posts are considered temporary posts and can easily be removed if needed. The layout of the posts will be painted out first by DPW, for review, if the Selectmen moves this forward. The space between the poles will be wide enough so vehicles (two vehicles passing) can enter and exit, from the business and Dunes parking lot, onto Perkins Road. The intent is to better define the entrance to the parking lot to control safe passage for everyone. Where the parallel parking spaces are located on Perkins Road, there will be three to four posts and it will become angled parking, as recommended. These recommendations were made by the committee to help eliminate standing parking and vehicle stacking on Perkins Road. There is also a recommendation that the angled parking be defined with striping.

The committee reviewed the illustration from Chief Walsh showing the area with the location of the posts and parking.

Martha Leary, 2281 Ocean Blvd, noted that when her parking lot is full, she has agreed to put a sign out on the corner of Ocean Boulevard saying that the lot is full. She will also be sure that her staff is on top of moving the traffic along. She stated that she would not mind if the State had a sign that directed people to Wallis Sands, once the lot is full.

Chair Mikolaities pointed out that this is one of the committee's recommendations.

Mrs. Leary commented there has never been an accident in the parking lot. She continued that in looking at the illustration showing the placement of the bollards, she is concerned about how far down they are going to be on the west side (near the entrance/exit in the back on Perkins). She does not think this is going to work. It is nice to look at a plan but the site has to be visited in order to understand what happens. She is not too thrilled about the bollards.

Member Bellino asked if it would help to have the location of the bollards painted out on the road before they were installed.

Mrs. Leary replied it probably would. She continued the bollards are there so people will have to back out towards the west on Perkins Road. She is concerned about the space. The area now is open but she believes it has been well controlled.

Tyler McGill stated that the parking lot has been run the way it is now for a while and there has not been any issues. Changing something that hasn't had an issue, opens Mrs. Leary up to potential liability and it is not known how it is going to function. That scares him as a property owner; implementing something that they do not necessarily know how it is going to work. In looking at the plan, his concern is that the cars parked along the pizza shop are facing inland. If the majority of the cars are coming off Ocean Boulevard, they are coming in the wrong way to get into an angled parking spot, which seems it would create more issues. Also, with the way the pizza shop is now, there is ample space for the cars to move. With that being condensed down with the bollards, he sees it creating a bottleneck where the pizza shop patrons are pulling out. He reiterated this is changing something that has never been an issue. That is a liability concern for Mrs. Leary and for himself.

Member Abrams asked how far the bollards are anticipated to be off the white line. He has seen families walking in this area. He asked if the families are going to walk on the street side of the bollards or the inside to get to the beach. He pointed out that there are a considerable amount of people who park in the lot and travel down to the beach. This is narrowing the area and creating another issue of pushing the pedestrians towards the road side.

Chief Walsh stated that he feels that the pedestrians are going to be walking between the white line and the bollards. There is quite a bit of distance.

Mrs. Leary pointed out that for the people parking in the back parking lot, a walkway was put in that runs along the side, in front of the store and out to the crosswalk.

Chair Mikolaities explained they are recommending something temporary. Chief Walsh is going to monitor this and if it is not working he will get rid of it. One of the long term recommendations is to have a traffic engineering firm look at this section of road, including the entrances and exits. The committee is just making recommendations to help control the chaos in that area. This is based on observations that people have made.

Chief Walsh commented they are trying to find a way to organize how it is operating. There are vehicles with a destination of the business. There are vehicles with a destination to visit Perkins Road. There are also vehicles with a destination of Ocean Boulevard and the beach. Then there are pedestrians with destinations of the businesses and the beach. The goal is to define the intersection and organize it better.

Member Abrams asked if this addresses the safety of Perkins and Ocean Boulevard. There are also concerns on parking, which seems to be what they are talking about. He asked if this finishes all the concerns that the Selectmen have requested.

Chief Walsh replied it does not finish all the concerns. It is a temporary solution to see if it will make things better and how they can build upon that.

Mrs. Leary stated that she understands the concern about people walking down Perkins. There really isn't any room for them to walk. She asked what the long term plan is for this.

Chair Mikolaities explained they are suggesting to the Selectmen to appropriate funds to hire a traffic engineering firm. That will be for next year because there are no funds for this purpose this year. The committee has made some temporary recommendations and have agreed to view that over the summer to see how it is working. The committee will then be going back to the Selectmen in September. He commented that there is a science to this and it needs to be studied more. There is a cause and effect for everything that is done.

Member Nelson stated the short term suggestions are great. She thinks they need to see how those go and reconvene in September and go from there. The ideas need to be tested to see if they will work.

Mrs. Leary stated that she has to be concerned about the impact to her property. She continued the safety is the concern. It is not just that section of Perkins Road that is a concern.

Vice-Chair Westover agreed. She stated the safety concern goes all the way down Perkins Road. From the rear lot of the Dunes down to Big Rock Road is very dangerous during the course of the summer. From Memorial Day to Labor Day is the impact. It is a safety issue for that period of time. It is appropriate to address it so no one gets hurt. She understands that nothing has happened on Mrs. Leary's property and that's terrific; however, that is not to say that something couldn't happen. There are a lot of things that happen on Perkins Road. The committee has drifted down towards the intersection but they cannot lose sight of the remainder of Perkins Road. She noted that the committee also had another long term recommendation, which was to provide a safe pedestrian passageway. That is not in the final report and she would really like to address that. She feels that this addresses a big component of the safety issue on Perkins Road. The Board of Selectmen are the "gatekeepers". Selectman Roman said to put everything in and they will make the tough decisions.

Chair Mikolaities asked for Chief Walsh to finish his update.

Chief Walsh stated that one thing he is noticing in other beach communities, is that they do not have parking on the side roads near the beach because they have town parking. These are towns in Maine, as well as on the Cape. The Town of Ogunquit has the majority of their activity in the downtown area. They have four miles of coastline and town parking. They have similar beach issues but they are not as significant as Rye. Once their lot is full, they close the gate and that is it for the day. The majority of their parking issues happen in the downtown area.

Member Bellino asked if they should mention the possibility of town parking with a shuttle.

Chief Walsh replied that he has found other towns that have tried satellite parking and it was not successful. Most towns have the parking near the beach and people walk.

Vice-Chair Westover commented that the emphasis of trying to navigate people south or north, based upon their travel, would be very helpful. She would imagine that anyone coming to Jenness who can't find a parking spot would be happy to know about Wallis Sands, which has accommodations that Jenness doesn't have. That is a change of behavior that they have to be proactive in redirecting to see what impact it has.

Chief Walsh commented that it is not uncommon on busy beach days that both sides of Rye is just full.

Vice-Chair Westover commented if the state parks are connected in communication they would both know that. She asked if this would be part of the conversation with the state.

Chief Walsh stated this goes back to staffing. He will be talking with the parks director starting the end of April about the upcoming season.

VI. Review Draft report to Selectmen

Short-term recommendations:

1. Stripe the fog lines at the Perkins Road and Ocean Boulevard intersection so the fog lines are 24ft apart. Public Works to do this as soon as possible; weather permitting.
2. “No Parking” and “No Stopping” signs on the north side of Perkins Road along the condominium. (*Street number should be listed*)
3. *Consider installation of* temporary bollards along 2281 Ocean Boulevard, bordering Perkins Road, to better define entrance and exit and discourage vehicles from backing into Perkins Road.
4. Engage in conversation with the owners/operators of the rear parking lot at 2281 Ocean Boulevard about not allowing cars to stack on Perkins Road, while waiting to enter the parking lot, and posting a “lot full” sign at the north and south approaches to Perkins Road at the Ocean Boulevard intersection when the lot is full.
5. Police Department to install the digital message board in front of the Dunes Motel with messages alerting visitors when lots are full and directing traffic to alternative seacoast sites.
6. Box out driveways on the south side of Perkins to provide residents with proper sight lines to exit and enter their driveway safely.

Mr. McGill expressed his concern on the loss of parking spaces due to the boxing of the driveways. He agreed that sight line for residents is an important safety concern; however, the loss of parking exacerbates safety issues (more vehicles making U-turns, pulling into driveways to turn around, etc.).

There was some discussion on whether they should add wording about “minimizing the loss of parking”. The committee agreed that they are a “safety” committee and the number of parking spaces is not for them to address. The town relies on the Public Works Director to make the best decision in regards to how much area should be boxed off near a driveway and this would be the case with this recommendation. The committee agreed to leave the wording of the recommendation as it is.

7. Install striping and “no parking” on pavement on Perkins Road as soon as weather permits.

The committee agreed to add:

8. Committee to reconvene in September, after observing summer activity, to reevaluate the short term recommendations.

Long-term recommendations:

1. Hire a traffic engineering firm to analysis traffic patterns *over the course of summer 2020*.

Mr. McGill expressed his concern on changes being made on Perkins Road without a traffic study. He suggested adding “no further changes to be made without a traffic study”.

Chief Walsh noted that the select board has always made long-term decisions and changes based on facts and data.

Member Bellino pointed out that they have had discussions that any change in flow of traffic should be based on recommendations from a traffic engineer. He expressed his concerns about the select board making changes to the parking ordinance without them being professionally based.

After review of the long-term recommendations, the committee agreed that the traffic study should include the parking, a possible sidewalk and how pedestrians are navigating to/from the beach safely. These recommendations will be listed under #1, traffic engineering study.

VII. Next Meeting

- Final Report will be presented to the Board of Selectmen at their next meeting.

VIII. Other Business

- No other business before the committee.

Adjournment

Chair Mikolaities adjourned the meeting at 7:31 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Dyana F. Ledger