

RYE PERKINS ROAD SAFETY COMMITTEE

Meeting

Thursday, March 28, 2019, 6:00 p.m.

Rye Town Hall

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

Non-voting members Present: Selectman Keriann Roman and Police Chief Kevin Walsh.

Also Present: Jim and Joan Cassin, 17 Perkins Road and Ryan McGill, 21 Perkins Road.

I. Call to Order

Chair Mikolaities called the meeting to order at 6:01 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 March 21, 2019 minutes

The following correction was noted:

- Page 3, 2nd paragraph should read: **Member Abrams commented that this addresses the intersection but that is not the intent of the committee.**

Motion by Karin Nelson to approve the minutes of March 21, 2019 as amended. Seconded by Mary Westover. All in favor.

V. Update from Selectman Roman

Selectman Roman stated that the Selectmen will be having a joint work session on April 8th at 5:30 p.m., before their regularly scheduled meeting, with police, fire, DPW, and the Beach Committee. The meeting is being held to work on a plan to get additional cooperation from the State. The Perkins Road/Ocean Boulevard intersection will be a part of the discussion. She asked that a member from the committee be present at the work session.

VI. Discuss Perkins/Rt 1A intersection sketch Chief Walsh update to the Commission

Chief Walsh explained that he and Chair Mikolaities met with Dennis McCarthy, Public Works Director, to review the intersection of Perkins Road and Ocean Boulevard. Perkins Road is an extra wide intersection, which is more inviting for vehicles. Some of the comments have been about the flow of traffic that consistently travels Perkins Road. There are also the challenges of vehicles loading and unloading on Perkins Road and turning around in driveways. He continued that they discussed looking at the boundary lines to see how it can be improved. One side of the road has a commercial property with five businesses, which has a lot of activity; however, it is not defined as to where cars exit and enter. Also, the parking is not regulated. He noted they discussed the idea of putting in posts (bollards) on Perkins Road, along the Dunes Hotel, to better define the entrance and exit. If the temporary bollards are put in, on the left side of the white line on town property, it would make a pathway for pedestrians walking up to the intersection.

Vice-Chair Westover clarified that pedestrians would be walking on the south side of Perkins Road but on the inside of the bollards.

Chief Walsh confirmed. He continued that the purpose of the bollards is to define how vehicles will enter and exit the property of the Dunes Hotel, especially in the area of the rear parking and pizza restaurant. This area is the biggest challenge because cars have to pull straight in and back out. He noted that he still needs to meet with the owners of the surf shop and Mrs. Leary to

review this idea. He stated that posts were put at the end of Dow Lane intersecting with Washington Road. People were making improper turns because this is an extra wide intersection. Also, people were not stopping at the stop sign at the end of Dow Lane. The temporary posts were put in to narrow the travel lanes to help improve those driving behaviors, which seems to be working. Mr. McCarthy made it more permanent by taking the pavement out, putting in permanent markers, filling in with gravel and moving the stop sign over. Chief Walsh explained they could try this idea for this year at Perkins Road and see how it works. He will defer to the expertise of Mr. McCarthy and Chair Mikolaities on whether the pavement should be taken out to be made more defined. He noted that if the pavement is taken out and made all dirt or grass, it will still not stop people from walking across to Jenness State Beach without going to the crosswalk. The committee will need to discuss this further when they discuss a long-term plan.

Chief Walsh stated the town has most of the posts already available. He will be ordering a few more with some other pieces that are needed. (He presented a photo of the bollards to the committee for review.)

Vice-Chair Westover asked if the bollards would be placed every 6ft.

Chief Walsh replied that this is what Mr. McCarthy stated he would like to see, based on the width of a car. He pointed out that if a vehicle hits one, it should not damage the car because the bollard is made of rubber (plastic). The bollard will bend over and pop right back up.

Chair Mikolaities stated the committee has three weeks to come up with a draft report. One of the things to address is “short-term” and “long-term”. The thought is that the bollards are short-term with little to no cost to the town. They can see how it goes this year. The white line will be restriped and there will be two new “no parking” signs. He noted there will still be the wider pavement but there will be two signs and the striping will be different. The committee can see how that works this year. There was also discussion about the committee going back to the Selectmen at the end of the summer to go over what they observed over the season. He stated this will cover the first couple of hundred feet of Perkins Road with minimal impact to the businesses. He noted that if the committee makes the recommendation to the Selectmen, and they agree to cut the pavement out, it will take some coordination with the State.

Vice-Chair Westover asked if the striping will be done by public works this spring.

Chief Walsh confirmed.

Member Bellino asked if they are still considering the electronic sign for the short-term plan.

Chief Walsh confirmed. The sign is usually set up just after the crosswalk going south. (He pointed out the location on the map for the committee.) The sign will be used to alert drivers when the lot is full at Jenness Beach.

Vice-Chair Westover asked how cars will turn around to go north at that point.

Chief Walsh replied the cars will keep going south.

Vice-Chair Westover asked if the northbound traffic will have the same signage.

Chief Walsh replied no. However, he has been in discussions with the State Parks Manager about having their staff close off the lots when they are full with someone waving traffic through.

Vice-Chair Westover noted that when Jenness is full, the vehicles will be waived on and the cars can then go to Perkins to take a left to go to the Dunes lot.

Chief Walsh commented that situation will always exist, as long as that business is there. They put up a sign when the lot is full. He is going to ask the staff at the Dunes lot if they can put the sign up closer to where the telephone pole is located so it is more visible.

Member Bellino stated there will still be the challenge with cars travelling from south to north. When Jenness is full, they might still be motivated to take a left onto Perkins. His hope was that there would be a sign there so they would not take that left turn and continue to Wallis State Beach.

Chief Walsh commented that they have a limited amount of lettering that can be on the sign. He will have to think about how the sign can be managed. The wording will have to be simplistic.

There was some discussion on possible wording on the signs for when the lot(s) are full. There was also some discussion on labeling Jenness and Wallis lots "A" and "B" which would have to be discussed with the State.

VII. Potential Solutions Discussion

Chair Mikolaities stated that he will start writing a draft report for the next meeting. He will send it out to the committee a few days before in order for the members to have time to read it.

Discussion on the area from the Dunes to Big Rock Road:

Vice-Chair Westover stated that the proposals for the intersection will be very helpful for the intersection and will help on Perkins Road somewhat. However, no matter what is done, there will always be vehicular traffic going east and west on Perkins. That has to be addressed, in addition to the pedestrian and bicycle traffic. This is what brought her to the Board of Selectmen originally. She would like the committee to continue to discuss the rest of the street and how it is impacted. She noted that the committee has been charged with considering "unintended consequences". The committee is burdened with that and rightfully so. She would not want to wish what happens on Perkins on any other streets in the neighborhood. However, the reality is that Perkins Road has been burdened with unintended consequences for a number of years or even decades. She pointed out that this has been going on for a long time. It has been brought to the Board of Selectmen for years with no results. She is delighted that they are now making

some progress and everyone is committed to trying to make it better. She reiterated this has been a long standing issue on Perkins.

Chief Walsh submitted copies of the parking ordinance to the committee members. Referring to the ordinance, he stated there is no parking on the north side of Perkins Road from Ocean Boulevard to Big Rock. The traffic is driving back and forth looking for parking. He suggested that they make the entire north side of Perkins “no parking” from Ocean Boulevard up to Central Road.

Vice-Chair Westover pointed out that right now, there is “no parking on pavement” up to Bernard and then it’s “no parking”. It is then silent, with regards to parking, from Big Rock to Central.

Chief Walsh stated it is silent on both sides from Big Rock to Central. He suggested that they make all of Perkins the same; “no parking” on the north and “no parking on the pavement” on the south side going all the way down.

Vice-Chair Westover stated that she thinks this is going to compound the issues on Perkins.

Chair Mikolaities stated he is going to bring this back to the word “safety”. He is now hearing from people who know that he is on this committee. They are saying that any parking that is displaced on Perkins is going to go into other neighborhoods, such as Big Rock and McLaughlin. He noted that the committee is a “safety committee”. They are not a “parking committee”.

Chief Walsh explained he is focusing on the two fire hydrants and keeping Perkins Road the same all the way to Central Road. The challenge is going to be Maple Avenue and McLaughlin.

Vice-Chair Westover stated that from Bernard up to Big Rock there is no parking allowed on the south side of Perkins Road. She continued that in the other area, there are cars going east and west. There are pedestrians going east and west. There is “no parking on pavement” on the south side. The reality is, when the car doors open, they are on pavement so it is an obstruction to the flow of traffic. This is part of the safety issue. There are people trying to walk against the traffic, going back and forth to the beach. People can walk on the right-of-way on the north side but on the south side there is no place to go to go against the traffic.

Member Nelson pointed out that Ocean Boulevard is the same with anyone opening their car door. That is a safety issue all the way down the corridor. She does not think this is something that can be changed.

Chair Mikolaities stated that “safety” to him is speed, sight distance, turnaround, illegal parking and obstruction. These are some of the things the committee has talked about. He asked if any of the twenty-one parking spaces on Perkins are causing safety issues.

Vice-Chair Westover replied that they are all causing a safety issue. People are driving erratically on Perkins Road to gain access to those spots. Compounding that with traffic going

east and west, pedestrians and people turning around causes safety issues. She pointed out that this is why she originally asked to have the parking eliminated on Perkins Road to allow for safe passage for everyone. She continued that she understands that it is not a popular suggestion to strip twenty-one spaces out. She also understands there are unintended consequences. She is not suggesting they lay this pain on anyone else. However, the reality is this is a big problem. She believes when the spots were designated, the town did not have the escalation of people that it does now. That was back in the 50's.

Ryan McGill, 21 Perkins Road, pointed out that the designation of parking was done when all of the lots, that now have homes on that side of Perkins, were all parking lots. He noted that if the town gets rid of parking on Maple, Old Beach and Perkins, the Town of Rye, in the Jenness Beach District, is providing zero public parking.

Vice-Chair Westover stated she has been on Perkins for forty-five years. There was never a problem on the street until the escalation in traffic had compounded to where it is a problem. There is so much going on in that area that the parking seems like the most natural thing to eliminate to calm it down and to allow for safe passage for everybody.

Mr. McGill asked how it would change safe passage unless the residents are willing to allow for a sidewalk in their front yards. He asked if people are going to walk in the dirt.

Selectman Roman stated that in her mind Perkins Road is a whole different scenario than the rest of town because of the businesses and Jenness Beach. What the select board is struggling with, is there are unintended consequences but the Selectmen have to make the tough decisions. She does not want the committee to worry about that aspect. If there is a tough decision to be made, or there are two options, the select board is going to be the ones that have to make it. She does not want to push cars parking on other roads either; however, other roads are not Perkins Road. Perkins has a lot of pedestrian traffic, vehicles, U-turns and people turning around in driveways because of the unique situation there. Perkins is a very unique road and it has to be treated a bit differently. The Selectmen are the ones that are going to have to figure out how to deal with it. She does not want someone getting hurt at Perkins. She is very frustrated because the residents on Perkins have been bringing this up for a really long time. The committee needs to keep in mind that whatever happens on Perkins is not going to happen in the rest of the town. Perkins is going to be treated a little bit differently because it has to be. She commented that the first step might be to see what can be done to minimize the safety issues.

The commission reviewed the safety concerns.

Safety Concerns:

- **Speed – (Especially cars speeding up to get into a parking spot that has opened up)**
- **Sight distance**
- **Turning around**
- **Illegal parking**
- **Obstructions**

- **U-turns**
- **Pedestrian conflicts**
- **Stacking**

Member Nelson asked how they change the behavior. A lot of the safety issues are uncontrolled behavior.

Vice-Chair Westover pointed out that if the twenty-one spots went away on Perkins, people would not be going down Perkins for that reason. The turning around and erratic driving, in that section of Perkins, is directly related to the parking spots there.

Member Nelson pointed out there is also a parking lot that people need to turn for. There will still be vehicles turning down Perkins for the parking lot.

Member Bellino stated that even if the spots are taken out, people are still going to go down Perkins and “pop” a U-turn. He noted that having the parking on both sides of Ocean Boulevard does slow down the traffic. He agrees that Perkins is a unique situation. He calls it an “expressway” because it is so wide and long. He wonders if removing the parking is taking away some of the calming that might slow down some of the traffic, particularly cars coming west to east.

Member Nelson stated she drives down Perkins daily. She probably drives faster now with no cars parked there, then in the summer. If parking is taken away, people will drive faster so that will cause more of a safety issue. She thinks that getting the area closest to Ocean Boulevard, (200ft), is going to really help the rest of Perkins.

Vice-Chair Westover commented it will definitely have a positive impact. She just does not know if it is going to eliminate people from going down Perkins as significantly as one would hope.

Chief Walsh noted that if the wide intersection is brought into line with other intersections in town, it will not be as inviting from Ocean Boulevard. By the time people realize it is there, they are going to be past it.

Speaking to Chief Walsh, Chair Mikolaities asked if a recommendation to the Selectmen should be to hire a retired officer to help control that area.

Chief Walsh stated it is difficult to find personnel to do those types of tasks. He noted that the parking enforcement hours have been increased over the years, with additional parking attendants for more coverage for the parking. He also staggers the parking shifts so there is extra coverage during busier times.

James Cassin, 17 Perkins Road, stated that at a previous meeting someone had talked about the speed bumps that are on Recreation Road. That might be something for Perkins. Someone coming down from Big Rock would have to slow down.

Joann Cassin, 17 Perkins Road, stated she has seen cars backing up going 30 miles per hour to get a free spot on Perkins.

Chief Walsh agreed to speak with Dennis McCarthy about the speed bump idea and if this is something that could be managed on Perkins.

Vice-Chair Westover suggested putting up signs that say “slow” or “caution”. Going down Central, there is an elevation adjustment just after Bernard going down Perkins. If someone is going at a “good clip”, they are not going to see someone walking right after that bump.

Mr. McGill noted that he already has a sign in his front yard that says “caution”.

Chair Mikolaities suggested that a recommendation could be that the Selectmen appropriate funds for traffic engineering services to look at some of the issues, such as signage, speed and sight distance. He noted that the engineers would want to study the traffic in July and August so this would be for changes for the future.

The committee agreed to include this as one of the recommendations.

Member Bellino suggested putting rubber signs down the center of Perkins Road that say “slow pedestrians”; much like the ones in the middle of the crosswalk at Wallis Road Extension.

Chair Mikolaities pointed out that the road is only 21ft wide. It is not wide enough.

The committee agreed the signs are effective on Ocean Boulevard; however, the width of Perkins limits this.

Committee agreed with Chair Mikolaities that the recommendation of a traffic engineer should be included in the report.

Vice-Chair Westover stated that sight lines from driveways has been an issue, especially on the south side. She asked if they are still entertaining the idea of blocking off the driveways on the south side to allow the residents to go in and out. She noted there are only two driveways. (She pointed to the driveways on the plan for the committee.)

The committee agreed to add this to the long-term solutions. After some more discussion, the committee agreed to recommend that the engineer look at crosswalks and sidewalks for safe passage ways.

Recommendations for the report:

- **Short-term recommendations:**
 - Bollards (temporary)
 - Pavement striping
 - Added “no parking” signs
 - Electronic message board, controlled by Police Department, in front of the Dunes Hotel indicating that the Jenness lot is full or that “both lots are full” (lot on Perkins). It will not individually address the private business lot on Perkins Road.
 - Committee to observe how the changes go over the summer and reconvene one more time at the end of summer to report back to the Selectmen.
- **Long-term recommendations:**
 - The committee agreed to add comments that any future (final) changes should be vetted by an engineer before being made permanent; for work such as removal of pavement.
 - Traffic engineer to look at permanent solutions for issues regarding speed, sight distance and signage. The engineer should also take into consideration crosswalks and sidewalks for safe passage.

VIII. Action items for next meeting

- Chair Mikolaities to work on a draft report for the next meeting. The committee members will be emailed a copy of the report a few days before the meeting in order to prepare comments about the draft for discussion.
- Chief Walsh will bring an update to the committee on his discussion with the Police Chiefs of Wells and Ogunquit about ideas they have found that work in their towns with regard to similar situations.
- Committee members to review the current parking ordinance, which was handed out by Chief Walsh.

IX. Public Input

James Cassin thanked the committee for their work on the committee. He also suggested the idea of a possible exit for cars at the back of the parking lot onto Perkins Road.

Chief Walsh was not sure this idea would be possible due to boundary lines and traffic constraints.

- **NEXT MEETING:** Thursday, April 4th, 6:00 p.m., Rye Public Library

Motion by John Bellino to adjourn at 7:47 p.m. Seconded by Mary Westover. All in favor.

Respectfully Submitted, Dyana F. Ledger