

HYDE PARK ROADS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

July 13, 2015

*All minutes are draft until approved by the Committee;
please check future minutes for approval of these minutes.*

Members Present: Brian Jones, Troy Hayford, Mike Dubie, Greg Paus

Members Absent: Jim Heath

Others Present: Ron Rodjenski, Town Administrator; attendees for Diggins Road - - Jim Fontaine, Rob Alvino, Robert Lair, Corey Hathaway, George Fearing, Victor Veve, William Veve for Juliet Veve; Nancy Tingle (Tingle Rd); Norm Andrews (Orchard Terrace); Gary Smith (Marcoux Road); Gus Elfer (Frost Road) and Chief Ed Webster, Hyde Park Fire Department.

Ron opened the meeting at 4:32 p.m.

1. **Welcome** – Ron stated that the committee was winding down its one year plus mission and has reached out to property owners on roads that are listed on the ‘Road List’. Ron updated everyone on the Selectboard’s decision on July 9th to pursue a preliminary engineering estimate for the cost to upgrade the Class 4 hill section of Diggins Road to Class 3 standards. Watershed Consulting is preparing a work proposal for the town to review.
2. **Road List Revision** – Ron handed out an updated road list, dated 7-13-2015, which moved Depot St Extension from the Class 3 with one home category to the Class 4 category because the Class 3 section actually serves as the access to Mill Street which has 8 homes. The town does not plow past Mill St so the correction is that there is one house on the Class 4 section. Depot St Ext will be deleted in future updates to the Road List as it is a Class 3 plowed road with 9 homes which are not being considered by this committee.
3. **Diggins Road** – Jim Fontaine asked whether the Class 3 portion of Diggins Road will be plowed if the Class 4 is not plowed. Brian J. stated that there has been no discussion on not plowing the first 0.22 miles but if the truck needs to turn around at that point, a turnaround area would be needed. Ron offered that the town would work with the adjoining landowners if any turnaround area was outside the highway right-of-way. Robert Lair stated that he was part of a landowners’ meeting recently for owners in the Kusserow Development and they are disturbed that the town is considering not plowing to the top of the hill. He noted that there are 22 parcels on the Class 4 road portion so Diggins Road should be plowed. Robert stated that there appears to be a legal issue created by even listing Diggins Road on the Road List and basically freezing any potential sales of property. Diggins Road, he feels, is a separate matter from the Road List discussions and should be on its own track to a resolution as quickly as possible. Robert noted that the collective value of the parcels is very significant and land does appear to be assessed much higher by the town than the market value. Rob Alvino offered that the landowners are in limbo and there needs to be action. Norm Andrews asked for clarification on what is a road; he reads the Road Acceptance Policy as 3 or more but the zoning states 4 or more. Ron will research that issue. Norm asked if maintenance costs were based on length of road and Ron stated yes and the revenue from each property for highway purposes is for all roads in town, not just the road serving a parcel. Victor Veve asked if the town was hurting for money to which Ron stated many residents complain about high property taxes. Victor asked if the Class 4 engineering report would extend past the dry hydrant and Ron stated that the Selectboard request was to evaluate only to the location the town plows turnaround now, near the Alvino driveway. Victor asked how this project started and Ron responded that the first road concern discussed by the Selectboard was the practice of the town plowing private roads, which was then added to other road practices such as plowing Class 4’s. The Selectboard wanted a comprehensive town-wide review of maintenance practices by a new town committee. William Veve asked if Diggins Road could have a special meeting just on their concerns to which Ron offered that everyone should wait for the engineering cost estimate. Robert Lair stated that everyday hurts and could the process be sped up to which Ron stated the engineering report was in process. Robert advised that the quicker the issue could be resolved, the quicker the parcels could be built upon which will provide new tax revenue for highways; so can the town meet the landowners’ needs at least ½ way. Ron noted that the Class 4 status, which typically means no winter plowing, has never changed and this current effort will resolve the situation. Julian Veve encouraged the town to obtain the engineering results as soon as possible. Greg P. reminded everyone that the Selectboard is working on Diggins Road and it is likely not going to be committee issue to resolve at this point. Robert L. noted that the landowners

don't want a tax war so resolving sooner than later is important to the landowners. Greg P. stated that he understood the frustration of the Kusserow Development landowners as he had a client that didn't know she bought on a Class 4 road. Robert Lair noted that the town approved the project and no improvements were required to the Class 4 road at that time. Brian J. reminded everyone that, as a Selectboard member, he knows the Selectboard wanted more information on the costs to upgrade, so to move forward, the board ordered the engineering report last Thursday. Rob Alvino asked if the Selectboard could approve projects but not require an upgrade to the Class 4 road. Rick Fearing asked who is liable to upgrade the Class 4 section of Diggins for access to the Gilbert subdivision. Gus Elfer asked everyone present if they knew why the road was called Diggins Road. He offered that people living or camping in the area would have to dig in each fall and not be able to dig out until spring. Gus offered that Hyde Park taxpayers shouldn't participate in land speculation. Gus asked if there would be any consideration for farms operating on Class 3 roads to continue to receiving town plowing services even if there was only one house/farm on that road. Gus felt that in fairness to all taxpayers, he has been able to keep the land in agricultural use rather than housing development partly due the avoided cost of having the road maintained by the town. Gus stated that he does appreciate the work done to keep town roads in good condition but small farm roads do provide an historic and traditional value for all residents in keeping Hyde Park land open and farms operating. Gary Smith (Marcoux Road) asked what the committee was going to recommend for Marcoux Road which also has a farm located on it. Mike Dubie stated that the recommendations need to be worked on by all five members, so he can't respond tonight. Greg Paus offered that the committee recommendations would be fair across the various situations in town. Gary S. noted that Marcoux Road has been there for a long time and when he bought the property, he never thought that the town might downgrade the road and stop plowing. Gary noted that the road does have a dry hydrant. Brian Jones stated that Class 3 roads with 3 or less homes was a starting point for the Road List. Ron suggested that due to the time, the committee now meet with its guest, Chief Webster.

4. **Guest: Hyde Park Fire Chief Edwin Webster** – Ron introduced Chief Webster and offered that he could provide information on fire response needs and road standards. Chief Webster advised that roads should be wide enough for fire apparatus which to him means a minimum of 18-foot roadway with 2-foot shoulders. This width allows two fire trucks to pass which is needed in most incidents because 99% of fires require water tankers to bring multiple loads of water. Chief Webster noted that this is the minimum width because in the winter, private roads in particular, often do not push back the banks to the full 22-foot wide width. 22-foot is the minimum to provide adequate access during an emergency. Chief Webster noted that the Diggins Road dry hydrant near the Alvino driveway is a critical water source for the department. Last winter the Diggins Road dry hydrant was used to fight a fire on Black Dog Lane. Sylvan Road has a hydrant but the loop road makes for tight turning of apparatus. Winter maintenance is important for access for all water sources. The weight of the fire trucks can also limit access on some private roads. Chief Webster hoped that the Diggins Road pond would be available all winter. Chief Webster noted that having maintenance changes on existing Class 3 roads was hard for him to understand. Greg P. stated that times have changed and the new road standards are relatively new, with zoning standards being adopted in 1988 and for many years the standards were not present or had no teeth and developers were not always required to meet the road requirements. Greg stated that the new standards are in place to improve the safety of current and future residents. William Veve asked how much an assessment would decrease if a road was downgraded. Greg P. referred that question to the Selectboard. Robert Lair noted that with an improved road, the property values would increase and generate higher tax revenues. Greg P. noted that housing developments often cost the town more than they contribute due to increased service demands. Robert Lair noted that at the current time, real estate agents won't even show land for sale in the Kusserow Development. Victor asked if the Diggins engineering report update and winter plowing of Diggins Road for 2015-2016 would be on the next Selectboard agenda. Ron stated that the engineering report update would be and the plowing discussion needed to be on their August or September agenda.
5. **Policy and Recommendations Discussion** – No time to work on recommendations. Mike Dubie asked that the August committee meeting be set up only when all five committee members can be present.
6. **Other Business** – None.
7. **Minutes** – Approval of the April 13th, May 11th and June 8th minutes deferred to the next meeting.
8. **Next Regular Monthly Meeting** – Tentative for Monday, August 9, 2015 at 4:30 p.m. depending on all five members being available. Municipal Offices. Continue to work on policies and recommendations and possibly receive update on Diggins Road engineering estimate.
9. **Adjourn** – Motion by Troy to adjourn at 5:37 p.m., with no objection, so adjourned.