



The Brookfield Citizen

Community Identity Through Communication

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Average People Promoting a Loving Environment

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River Bridge Project Article 22 of the Annual Town Meeting

By: Patti & Jim/White's Landing

By: the Board of Selectmen

On June 8, 2012 at the Town's Annual Meeting the people of Brookfield will be asked to vote on Article 22. This will give the Selectmen the authority to take by **eminent domain** land deemed necessary in order to complete a bridge/road project. **You will not be asked to approve a bridge project, nor will you be asked to approve it in the future.** Selectmen (or perhaps the State) will be given carte blanche to proceed with a bridge plan of their choice. This is alarming given the size, scope and permanent impact this project will have on the riverfront area over a period of 2-3 years.

On May 15th State Officials presented, at a public hearing, their proposed plan for the replacement of the Quaboag River bridge and the re-construction of 1,000 feet of roadway stretching from the causeway to the CSX bridge. A member of the State's design team from CLD described that the length of the bridge will increase from 79ft long to 98ft long and its width will increase from 24ft to 42ft. The width of the new bridge will include two 12-foot lanes with 4' shoulders and 5'5" sidewalks on both sides. The Narrative described the roadway profile will be raised to provide 6-inches of clearance between the bottom of the bridge and the design flood elevation, however, in his verbal description he sited a 9" raise with an additional 2.5ft raise. He stated that 7,400 sq ft of wetland will be permanently impacted; 2,400 sq ft of wetland will be temporarily impacted. The plan will increase the bridge load rating to accommodate heavier trucks and increase speed limit. The new "boat ramp" will accommodate a limited number of cars only, no trailers. The project will raise the roadway that will cause a shift of waters in times of flooding with the potential to increase flooding in the area and along the causeway south of the bridge.

The entire area of impact is listed on the Natural Heritage of Endangered Species Map, as well as, MASS Audubon' IBA program (Important Bird Areas). The IBA program states "the Quaboag IBA contains critical, extensive, freshwater, marsh habitat for a cadre of marsh species and migrant waterfowl". They also state,

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Dear Brookfield Voters,

ARTICLE 22 at the June 8 Annual Town Meeting deals with the Route 148 bridge over the Quaboag River. Mass Dept. of Transportation (Mass DOT) inspectors have determined that this 80 year old bridge is at a significant risk of bridge failure especially when fire engines, trucks and school buses cross the bridge.

Even though the Town owns the bridge, the State has offered to provide \$3.7 million to design and construct a replacement bridge at no cost to the Town if the Town obtains temporary and permanent easements from property owners whose land will be affected by the construction. Article 22 asks that the voters give the Board of Selectmen the authority to negotiate a final bridge design with the Mass DOT and to acquire the rights of way from property abutters through gift, purchase, or eminent domain as a last resort if an agreement cannot be reached with a particular property owner.

On May 15 in the Town Hall, the Mass DOT presented its 25% concept design for the bridge and obtained feedback from voters about design changes. The Mass DOT had previously held three other meetings with Town officials and with Jim Correia and Patti White of White's Landing, who have expressed concern about the impact of the current bridge design on their

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property. If the Town gives approval at the June 8th Annual Town Meeting, the Mass DOT will then incorporate changes into the design and have further discussion with the Selectmen at the 50% and 75% design stages. Once the final bridge design is complete, the Selectmen will obtain appraisals for any negative impact on abutting properties and negotiate final agreements for easements from four abutters.

The bridge would be moved about 10 feet east to smooth out a curve in the road and to improve safety. State design standards require that a new bridge have a single span rather than two spans resting on a bridge abutment in the middle of the River as it now does. Additionally, the bridge must be raised on the southern end to allow the bridge to pass a 50 year flood and on the northern end to eliminate the big dip between the two bridges thereby improving sight lines for drivers exiting Mill Street onto Route 148. The increased height of the bridge on the south side would necessitate drainage work on the White's Landing property owned by Jim Correia and Patti White. In response to their objections to the initial bridge design, the Mass DOT has lowered the south end of the bridge from the height it originally proposed and has indicated that it will consider further design changes requested at the public hearing.

As a result of a year of discussions, the current design for the new bridge has some very positive features:

- A structure for the Town to add a water line under the bridge to bring Town water to residents on the south side of Town;
- Sidewalks on both sides of the bridge and a crosswalk at White's Landing address pedestrians' and bicyclists' safety concerns;
- A new kayak and canoe launch and parking area constructed by the State on the northeast corner of the bridge will connect nicely with the Town's new Mill Street park, improve safety by vehicles exiting and entering the area from Route 148, and encourage foot and bike traffic, with positive impact on White's Landing; and
- The removal of the center pier in the river, bringing the river closer to its original state and making it easier for boaters to pass under the bridge.

The bottom line is that the bridge needs to be replaced. A vote in favor of Article 22 allows your elected officials, the Board of Selectmen, to negotiate a satisfactory design with the Mass DOT that has the least impact on abutters and to obtain the necessary easements. **The Board of Selectmen and the Advisory Committee recommend this course of action**, which has already been used successfully and amicably to acquire a piece of property essential to the bridge project. It must also be noted though that at least one of the Selectmen is philosophically opposed to the taking of land by eminent domain.

A vote against the project at the very least jeopardizes the construction deadlines when there is already a risk of bridge failure. In the worst case, Mass DOT could decide to scrap the Brookfield bridge project and fund the next bridge project on their list. Brookfield taxpayers would then have to pay 100% of the costs of bridge replacement.



Brookfield seniors are invited to a brown bag luncheon at the Brookfield Congregational Church Tuesday, June 12 at 11:30 a.m. Cake will be served to celebrate June birthdays. Join us for a rousing game of Bingo! We need seniors to assist with organizing our events, volunteer for a couple months so everyone has a turn!

The Medi Car service is available for a ride to Doctors appointments, call West Brookfield 508 867 1407. There is a need for drivers for this service, please call West Brookfield Senior Center if you are interested.

Tai Chi continues Tuesdays at 8:30 a.m. in the Banquet Hall of the Brookfield Town Hall.

A Foot Clinic with Dr. Quigley is scheduled for Tuesday, June 26, 1:30 p.m. in the Banquet Hall of the Brookfield Town Hall. A new procedure added is to call Rikki LaMonda at 508 867 4578 for an appointment, please leave a message with your telephone number, she will get back to you. Due to the popularity of this service drop ins are not allowed.

The next Council on Aging meeting will be Wednesday, June 13 at 4:00 p.m. in the kitchen of the Brookfield Town Hall. All are invited to attend!

THE CULTURAL CENTER

The Cultural Center at Eagle Hill column will return sometime around August/September with the new 2012/2013 schedule.

Thank you for your patronage.



Annie

June 15-July 8

Music by: Charles Strouse

Lyrics by: Martin Chamin

Book by: Thomas Meehan

All shows are performed:

Every Friday & Saturday at 8:00

Every Sunday at 2:00 unless otherwise noted.

Additional Performances on 6/23 @ 2:00 and 7/5 @ 8:00

That cute little orphan is out to find her place in the world. Come, join us as she tries to make the world hers.

Visit www.stageloft.com for more information