

**TOWN OF WILTON
SELECT BOARD
PUBLIC HEARING
TOWN HALL COURTROOM**

DATE: July 16, 2018
TIME: 6:00 PM
PLACE: Wilton Town Hall
PRESENT: Chairwoman Kellie-Sue Boissonnault, Selectman Kermit R. Williams, Selectman Matt Fish, Town Administrator Paul Branscombe, Administrative Assistant Janice Pack

Chairwoman Boissonnault opened the Public Hearing to discuss the proposed closing of Stage Coach Road Bridge. She did the roll call, and then invited all to join her for the Pledge of Allegiance. She noted that anyone wishing to speak should come to the table, and state their name and address. She introduced Jim Cutler and Jim Lavacchia and noted that they had both already given their opinion on the proposed closing.

Selectman Williams gave the background on the bridge, stating that the bridge had been red-listed, and noting how the repairs could be afforded, and the timetable for repairs to be done. The biggest reason that the bridge is on the red list is because of the supports. While a proposal had been received from Mr. Bean, it did not address the supports. To do the work necessary to get the bridge off of the red list would be very expensive. The red list is basically a warning from the State that says the bridge needs attention; it could be closed at any time.

Mitch Young asked how much money the Town's 20% would be to bring the bridge up to state standards. Selectman Williams said that was hard to say. Jim L said a ballpark figure would be \$19,000 for engineering, materials would be about \$85,000 and about double that for installation; maybe \$200,000 to completely redo the bridge. The state won't do the repair when we want them to; currently we would be on the list for 2026. Mr. Young said he lives way at the other end of Stage Coach Road, and he would like the traffic on the bridge reduced to foot traffic if that was an option. He thinks most of the traffic on Stage Coach Road is from people who don't live on Stage Coach Road. Regarding concerns for emergency access, he feels traffic is a greater concern.

Dave Dicer lives across from Mitch; he's lived there for 22 years, and feels the road has been abused by people who use it as a bypass. The speed of the trucks that use it contribute to its poor conditions. He agrees that we need emergency access, maybe a gate would work.

David Darbant, also lives on Stage Coach Road, and agrees with Dave and Mitch about the traffic and would like to reduce it. He sees additional cost to the Town every year to regrade the road; perhaps closing it would reduce those costs. They have a plot of land next to the river. He did want to know that the road would still be maintained by the town. They are open to talking about using a portion of their land to make a turnaround. Selectman Fish assured all that the road will still be maintained by the Town.

Robin Maloney said they would be most directly affected by the closing and they are definitely against it. The bridge was built in 1940, and classified as 3 tons since 1996. She agrees that speeding is an issue but they are very concerned about being stuck in the winter time. One of her biggest concerns is signage. She feels that letting people know what is at the other end will encourage people to slow down and see what is coming. She feels that the decking is the biggest problem and should be repaired. She said that during a January meeting a

sum of money was recommended by Mr. Condra to be put aside for the bridge repair; she wondered where that money had gone. She does not want a turnaround right next to her house.

Jane Duane owns the fields that abuts everyone who has spoken so far. She feels that if you reroute everyone from Stage Coach, they will be flying down Davisville Road. She also wonders about school busses. She wants to know if there is any way to restrict access. She understands Robin's concern about her mother needing medical attention in an emergency situation.

Chief Olesen said that after the original study of closing the road, he went to Stage Coach to monitor the traffic. He said the first morning, 2 cars passed him. He is willing to continue to monitor traffic, but when he was there, it was very light. Selectman Williams asked if he thought it was plain enough that it was a 3 ton bridge; Chief Olesen said that it was. Selectman Williams asked about an F350 or similar crossing that bridge, and Chief Olesen said that he wouldn't take that chance.

Selectman Fish said that NRPC has traffic counting equipment that we could borrow; he agrees that traffic is light whenever he has been up there too. Selectman Williams asked how much time someone would save going that way as a "short cut" and Jim Cutler said they had done drive time studies with the fire truck going over or around. It adds about 3 and a half minutes at normal drive time in a pickup truck. Selectwoman Boissonnault asked if that was in a response vehicle; Jim C said that was in a personal vehicle. The only concern from the Fire Department is that if it were a life safety event, it will take 3 and a half minutes longer if they have to go around. He also worries about turning it into a walking bridge as he wouldn't know how well it was maintained; it would become more dangerous.

Tom Schultz said he could understand both sides but as a citizen of the town his concern is that they've already lost one street in town (off of Captain Clark Highway) and we have roads for a reason and people should be allowed to use them.

Hearing no further comments, Selectman Fish added that we are trying to spend our tax dollars wisely as we have the cost of rebuilding a bridge which can only possibly be rebuilt for passenger cars only versus closing the bridge and creating a dead end road.

Selectman Williams agreed with some of the points, and said that his biggest concern is that we would spend a significant amount of taxpayer dollars and still have the State decide that it wasn't up to code and would need to be closed.

Mitch Young asked if it could be a footbridge. Selectman Fish said that we would not be able to maintain the bridge for the standards of an ambulance.

Chairwoman Boissonnault said that Robin had brought up the point that she had spoken to the DOT and they were surprised that we had done the work to replace the decking and were now thinking of closing it. If we replace the decking it would not remove it from the red list because the abutments haven't been fixed. So a great deal of money might be spent and yet the State could still move to close it. Selectman Williams said that the decking has been replaced, but when an inspector came out, he said he had been able to put a screwdriver right through it, so at that point the wooden decking was strengthened. Selectman Fish said it sounds like conflicting information. Because there is a narrow channel under the bridge, it may be too small for the volume of water that goes through there.

Chairwoman Boissonnault wants to look into the information that appears conflicting. She wants Jim L to begin putting up more signage, posting the 3 ton limit, passenger cars only, and 25 mph speed limit signs. She said it is not their intent to close the road; they are just trying to do what is in the best interests of most. Chairwoman

Boissonnault reminded all that fixing the bridge requires raising the grade and she wants to be sure that all aspects are covered. She asked Mr. Branscombe to contact the DOT to find out exactly why we're on the red list. He said he would and also mentioned that when you do a reimbursement project with the State, you need to put the entire amount up and you receive the reimbursement afterwards.

Andrew Duane said that they had a red listed bridge where they used to live and the state did close it. The bridge was rebuilt the following year and cost \$800,000; their town paid about \$160,000. He said there is signage on one side of our bridge, but not the other.

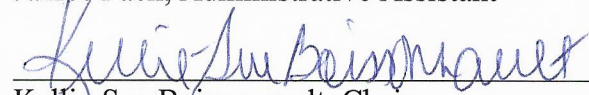
Bart Hunter lives on Davisville Road; his wife grew up on Stage Coach Bridge Road. His greatest concern is the Fire Department being able to access the road. Jim L said that what concerned the State was scour, which is caused by the velocity of water, and what is eroding the bridge beneath the water line. In 1993 the bridge inspections began. There has been clear deterioration of the superstructure and the sub structure since then. He added that if a new bridge was built, the DOT would require a 10% "crawl shelf" added so there would need to be a 10% increase to the stream banks.

Jane Duane said that her report from the DOT said that the deck structure is a 4, the super structure is a 4, and the sub structure is a 7. Her report is from 3/14/18. Her point is that everyone seems to be reading from a different report. She wants someone from the State to come and explain this. Her report also says that in 2019 this bridge is slated for maintenance.

Chairwoman Boissonnault said that there will be no action taken other than police presence and signage until more information is gathered.

At 7:04PM the Public Hearing was Closed.


Respectfully Submitted:
Janice Pack, Administrative Assistant



Kellie-Sue Boissonnault, Chair



Kermit R. Williams



Matthew S. Fish