



Monday, December 18, 2023

Public Hearing - Board of Selectmen Minutes – FINAL

In attendance: Dianne Craig (Selectmen), Alicea Burse (Selectmen)

Guest (s): Ryan Hall (Fire Chief), Shae Simino (Road Agent); Chris Moen (Emergency Management Director), Brandon Stocker (former Emergency Management Director)

CALL TO ORDER

The Board called the Public Hearing to order at 6:00pm.

Public Hearing began at 6:00pm.

EMERGENCY LANE CLARIFICATIONS (Lempster Coach and Center Road)

Chair, Dianne Craig opened the Public Hearing with the following prepared statement:

“We are gathered here this evening to discuss two class six bridges in the town of Goshen. The class six bridge on Lempster Coach Road which was washed out in the summer storm in 2021 and the class six bridge on Center Road, sometimes referred to as Merrigan’s corner.

The Lempster Coach class six road underwent many discussions starting in 2020 (prior to the storm) which was intended to become a temporary emergency lane so that repair work could occur on the lower class five bridge. Without approval of the class six portion of the road (including the class six bridge) becoming an emergency lane, residents would have been trapped and unable to receive emergency services during the repairs of the lower class five road/bridge. During the discussions the Board thought it had completed the necessary steps for the class six road to be an emergency lane. A recent review of minutes does not find evidence this action was captured.

The Center Road bridge was also a topic of discussion for emergency lane status in 2021 when a forest/wildfire broke out and emergency services needed to respond. At the time of the fire, the bridge had been washed out by the same storm that impacted the Lempster Coach class six bridge. All mutual aid responding to the fire call responded to the Center Road location on the Brook Road end. Responders from mutual aid were unable to respond in a timely manner as the bridge was out. Goshen responders were able to enter from the other end. This incident precipitated safety discussions and resulted in the Board discussing emergency lane status for repair work. A recent review of minutes does not find evidence this action was captured.

At no time was it the intent of the Board to revert either class six bridge or road to a class five where maintenance and associated costs would become a burden to the Town. It was always the intent that these two bridges would remain class six and have the emergency lane provisions enacted to allow for safety repairs. Center Road bridge was repaired prior to a Public Hearing to expend the funds by the Town.

We are here this evening to ensure proper notifications and documentation do occur for this public welfare and safety interest and that the roads remain a class six status to prevent incurring unintended expenses in the future. This hearing is being held based on the recommendations of Town counsel.

To date, the Center Road bridge has been replaced using 100% non-town funding.

The Lempster Coach Road Bridge class five portion has been a multi-year project that includes the capture of a warrant article for funding at the time the Board was discussing the emergency lane provisions. Work to upgrade the class six portion of the road had already begun in 2021 when the summer storms hit in preparation for starting the class five bridge repairs. At that time, the class six bridge was destroyed by the same storm. At this time, no repairs have begun on either the lower class five bridge or the upper class six bridge on Lempster Coach Road. Engineering studies on the class five bridge have occurred.”

Ms. Craig asked the Fire Chief, Ryan Hall if he would like to share additional information.

Chief Ryan Hall read from a prepared statement as follows:

“To whom it may concern,

I am writing regarding the importance of maintaining the portion of Center Rd between Brook Rd and the main section of Center Rd as an emergency lane.

In my time on the fire department, we have had 2 large fire events in the area locally known as Blood Valley. One in the spring of 2016 and another in the spring of 2021. In 2016 we were fortunate that the bridge was still in place, and we were able to get equipment and manpower to the head of the fire before it was able to spread.

The fire in the spring of 2021 was a smaller fire but we were hindered overall by having to access it off Center Rd. It was closer to the Brook Rd end, but all equipment and manpower had to go up Center Rd and access from that end. We were able to contain it but if the fire conditions had been any worse, I strongly feel that we would have had a much more difficult time containing the fire.

These are just two scenarios that have happened. The potential for other emergencies in that area is almost limitless. There are several hiking and recreational trails in the area that we could be called upon to rescue someone. It is closer to our station to access off Brook Rd than to go up Center Rd. It is also much closer for any mutual aid coming from Sunapee or Newbury.

In closing I believe that having the road maintained as an emergency lane is vital to mitigating many potential different emergency situations.

Sincerely,

*Ryan Hall
Goshen Fire Chief”*

Ms. Craig asked the former Emergency Management Director (EMD), Brandon Stocker who was the active EMD at the time and Chris Moen the current EMD if they would like to share additional information.

Brandon Stocker shared that emergency lane access at the Lempster Coach Road and Center Road locations is beneficial to the town and those needing emergency services. The area is filled with hiking trails; and mitigating fires and performing rescues in those areas will be easier with the necessary emergency access and repairs. Mr. Stocker further noted that the town would be liable for the expense of helicopters if used in rescues or forest fires. So having a bridge at these locations helps to mitigate that by reducing response time.

Mr. Hall recounted the events of 2021 where Sunapee responders had to go an additional five or more miles to respond to the forest fire scene as there was no bridge access.

Ms. Craig stated that the Board will first discuss Center Road and then Lempster Coach Road.

CENTER ROAD DISCUSSION

Dianne Craig opened the floor for discussion of Center Road to the Board.

Alicea Bursey motioned to retroactively and going forward declare Center Road as an emergency lane. Dianne Craig seconded the motion.

No discussion occurred at the Board.

Ms. Craig opened the floor for discussion of Center Road to the Public.

Mr. Moen asked that since the town did work there would this reclassify the road as a class five? Dianne stated that town counsel did not consider the work performed to have reverted the bridge or road to a class five status.

Mr. Moen also asked if this would be subject to bars and gates. Ms. Bursey said, no.

There was no further comment from the Public. Dianne Craig returned the discussion to the Board.

Dianne Craig repeated the motion before the Board, “the motion is to retroactively and going forward declare Center Road as an emergency lane” and asked all in favor of the motion indicate so by saying “aye”. All against the motion indicate by saying “no”.

The “ayes” have it and the motion is adopted to 2-0 to retroactively declare Center Road as an emergency lane.

ROLL CALL: Dianne Craig – Aye Alicea Bursey - Aye

PART TWO: Alicea Bursey motioned to retroactively accept and expend FEMA funding for the repair of the Center Road class six bridge. Dianne Craig seconded the motion.

Ms. Bursey opened the floor for discussion of Center Road to the Board.

There were no additional comments from the Board.

Ms. Bursey opened the floor for discussion of Center Road expenditures of FEMA funding to the Public.

There were no comments or discussion from the Public.

Ms. Bursey returned the discussion to the Board. There was no additional discussion at the Board.

Dianne Craig repeated the motion before the Board, “to retroactively accept and expend FEMA funding for the repair of the Center Road class six bridge” and asked all in favor of the motion indicate so by saying “aye”. All against the motion indicate by saying “no”.

The “ayes” have it and the motion is adopted to 2-0 to retroactively accept and expend FEMA funding for the repair of the Center Road class six bridge.

ROLL CALL: Dianne Craig – Aye Alicea Bursey - Aye

LEMPSTER COACH ROAD DISCUSSION

Alicea Bursey motioned to confirm and clarify that the class six portion of Lempster Coach Road is retroactively and going forward an emergency lane and remains a class six road in an emergency lane status. Dianne Craig seconded the motion.

Ms. Craig opened the floor for discussion to the Board.

Ms. Craig stated that an abutter, Sandra Sonnichsen, had provided an email in support of the Lempster Coach Road discussion but would not be able to attend this evening.

Ms. Craig opened the floor for discussion of the Lempster Coach Road to the Public.

There were no additional comments from the Public.

Ms. Craig returned the discussion to the Board.

There were no additional comments from the Board.

Dianne Craig repeated the motion before the Board, “to confirm and clarify that the class six portion of Lempster Coach Road is retroactively and going forward an emergency lane and remains a class six road in an emergency lane status. Dianne Craig seconded the motion” and asked all in favor of the motion indicate so by saying “aye”. All against the motion indicate by saying “no”.

The “ayes” have it and the motion is adopted to 2-0 confirming and clarifying that the class six portion of the Lempster Coach Road is retroactively and remains a class six road in an emergency lane status.

ROLL CALL: Dianne Craig – Aye Alicea Bursey - Aye

The Board had no further comments or concerns. The Board considers this matter closed.

Alicea Bursey motioned to adjourn. Dianne Craig seconded the motion. All were in favor; motion carried, 2-0. Public Hearing adjourned at 6:14pm.