

DRAFT Minutes
Webster Planning Board
Scenic Road Subcommittee Work Session
June 12, 2018

Subcommittee members present were Susan Rauth and Paul King (Planning Board); Nanci Schofield (Select Board), and Betsy Janeway and Bob Quinn (Conservation Commission). Also present was Jaye Bowe, who is interested in joining the group. Chairperson Rauth explained that the group is a subcommittee of the Planning Board and the Board will vote to establish the Scenic Road Subcommittee at their June 21st meeting.

The subcommittee's objective is to review ongoing issues related to scenic road maintenance and to recommend any changes to the Select Board. Webster can adopt regulations that are different from or in addition to those outlined in the State law, including criteria used by the Planning Board in deciding upon requests to cut trees or remove stone walls or to protect trees smaller in size to establish regenerative growth. However, any new regulations must follow the same process as the original Scenic Road designation; e.g., petition to change the criteria, notice to landowners, changes appearing in the warrant of a Town meeting. The question of whether administrative changes fall under this process can be put to the NHMA (for example, notifying the Select Board prior to ditching the Scenic Roads).

Ms. Rauth presented an overview of the Scenic Road law and information from A Hard Road to Travel (HRT). In addition to the Scenic Road statutes (RSA 231:157-158), there are over 20 NH statutes pertaining to vegetation along the roadside. Other related issues include the ownership of land, ownership of trees, and the width of older highways. It is a complex issue and the members are encouraged to review the issues presented in HRT.

The group listed issues that have been discussed in public meetings, including road widening; repair of damage (i.e., snow plowing); width of scenic roads and Town right of way on the shoulders; size of trees; extent of ditching and damage to trees and roots; size of rock walls.

Many factors have shaped town roads since the statute was enacted in 1971, including size of equipment, size of vehicles, development, extreme weather and others. Bob Quinn suggested that the original intent of designating the three scenic roads is important to the project. Susan Rauth encouraged the members to visit Gerrish, Bashan Hollow and Mutton Roads. She suggested a site visit with the Road Agent would be helpful to understanding gravel road maintenance. She also suggested a tree expert could be consulted about the size of trees necessary for regenerative growth. Nanci Schofield suggested that communication between the Town and the residents before maintenance is undertaken could be an important factor.

The next steps are to continue the research and Subcommittee members agreed to review:

1. Scenic road laws and related issues described in HRT (Susan Rauth will distribute)
2. Examples from other states (Nanci Schofield)

3. Issues related to the width of the three Webster scenic roads (Nanci Schofield)
4. History of scenic roads in Webster (Bob Quinn)
5. Options for scenic road criteria in Webster; i.e., size of trees and stone walls (Betsy Janeway and Webster Conservation Commission)

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, June 26th at 6:30 p.m. at Town Hall. All Planning Board meetings are public and residents are welcome to attend.

Submitted by:
Susan Rauth, Chair