

ATKINSON PLANNING BOARD  
Regular Meeting  
Atkinson, New Hampshire  
Wednesday, October 6, 2010

**Present:** Paul DiMaggio, Vice Chairman; Bill Bennett, Ex-Officio, Regular Members: John Wolters, Ted Stewart. Alternate Member: Harold Morse

**Others:** Cliff Sinnott, RPC

The meeting was called to order at 7:33 pm by Mr. DiMaggio, due to Ms. Killam being away.

**Correspondences:**

Incoming: RPC annual dues; motion by Mr. Bennett to recommend to Selectmen to support dues to RPC for 2011. 2<sup>nd</sup> by Ted; unanimous to send letter of support.

Outgoing: None

Motion by Mr. Bennett to change order of agenda to proceed with Mr. Sinnott, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Ted; unanimous.

**Discussion:**

**MBTA Commuter rail for Plaistow: Station and lay-over yard.**

Mr. Sinnott explained that Rockingham Planning commission has been involved in this Plaistow project because it is their charge by the State to foster transportation and that their vote on the final plan is required as part of the TIP (Transportation Improvement Program) process. He apologized for not informing Atkinson earlier. He also explained that it is very early in the process and he assured residents in attendance that there was plenty of time to express concerns and influence final decisions.

Mr. Sinnott gave the history and timing, and admitted RPC could have advised Atkinson earlier.

Bill Bennett noted that Atkinson's lack of representation on RPC was equally at fault due to difficulty of getting volunteers.

Mr. Sinnott explained that RPC is charged with developing (fostering development) of any and all modes of transportation in their territory, to reduce roadway congestion.

Rail terminal for Plaistow has been delayed since 2008 due to 1) track rights, 2)

lack of capital funding, and 3) operating subsidy is needed. The reason the Plaistow station project got started was by solving those 3 problems. 1) MBTA and PanAM resolved track rights, 2) grants became available for funding, and 3) no operating costs if the layover yard is close to the train station.

The proposed funding is \$29 million from a one-time program called TIGER II. The total available is \$460 million in grant funds, and there are about 1000 applications totaling \$19 billion. The chances of Plaistow's project getting TIGER II funding is about one in thirty-two (1/32.)

Mr. Sinnott explained that DOT is the applicant for the project, and Plaistow is the co-applicant. RPC is a "participating entity." The grant request was submitted in late August, and the results of the grant process should be known in November.

Questions were invited from the Public.

Resident Dave Harrigan noted that an EPA consent decree would limit running of engines to 60 minutes before leaving and 30 minutes after end of run. The first train would leave at 5:20 AM, making their warm-up start at 4:20AM, with 4 more trains starting up every hour after. It was noted by others that the whistle would need to be test blown before the train rolled, so about 5:20 AM and every hour after until 9:20 AM., and the whistle would also blow at certain intersections.

Debbie DeSimone stated:

- 1) Noise is not really an issue, as people would get used to it
- 2) Pollution is a serious health problem, and needs serious investigation.
- 3) And research must be done on an increase in crime rates
- 4) What would be the financial costs to local residents?

Mr. Sinnott noted that crime investigation has not been done yet, and that the public could and should bring these pertinent concerns up at future public hearings.

He also noted that the facility would be owned and operated by NH DOT and leased to MBTA. The cars would be owned 80% by the State, and 20% by MBTA. The project would not start until late 2013 at the very earliest if it gets approved. Plaistow wants to operate the train station as an enclosed facility. The train schedule would be mostly the same as Haverhill's schedule.

Mr. Sinnott went on to explain that the procedure from here on if it becomes funded is:

- 1) MBTA and NHDOT need to create an operating agreement
- 2) More planning and financial modeling and verification of data

- 3) Environmental assessment and hearings on wetlands and floodplains as well as noise considerations and air quality studies
- 4) TIP needs to be approved by RPC
- 5) Legislative approval is needed
- 6) Then service start-up

There will be hearings along the way by the DOT and Legislature. This will be the opportunity for the Public to bring up concerns and have issues addressed.

Other questions and answers: The Atkinson Planning Board has no authority to disapprove the project; the Plaistow Planning board will take it up under site plan review and may have a say in the approval.

This portion of the meeting concluded at 9:18 PM

**Other Business:**

- 1) John Wolters would like copies for each Planning Board member of pages 12 and 13 of Town and City on new Zoning Legislation
- 2) Road Bond reviews: Bill Bennett made a motion to recommend to Selectmen to retain the \$40,000 bond on Dunkin Donuts, 2<sup>nd</sup> by John Wolters.

Discussion followed; Bill Bennett made a motion to amend his original motion (John Wolters 2<sup>nd</sup>) to read, "recommend to Selectmen to release \$35,000 of the bond until brush and stumps are cleared from the site." Amendment was approved, and the amended motion was approved unanimously to recommend to Selectmen to release \$35,000 to Dunkin Donuts. Harold Morse made an additional motion (2<sup>nd</sup> by John Wolters) to have Ted report to Selectmen if Dunkin Donuts brush and stumps removed, then recommend to Selectmen to release all \$40,000 of bond. Unanimously approved.

Meeting adjourned at 9:44 PM.

respectfully submitted by Sue Killam, from notes made by Paul Dimaggio