**HISTORIC DISTRICT &
HISTORIC PROPERTY
COMMISSION**

Allison Sanders, Chair
Lisa Pojano, Vice-Chair
Gilbert Weatherly, Clerk
Jeffrey Bendremer
Lori Fusco

Alternates
Pam Brown
Peter Gaboriault
Alice Schroeder

**TOWN HALL
238 Danbury Road
Wilton, Connecticut 06897**

Historic District Commission Special Meeting Minutes
Monday, November 9, 2020
Electronic Meeting: 5:00 pm

I. Call to order: 5:06

    a. Attendance: Commissioners Sanders, Pojano, Weatherly, and Bendremer present. Alternate Schroeder attending

    b. Minutes: Discussion and approval of the Nov. 4, 2020 minutes is waved to

    the next regular meeting.

II. Lover's Lane Bridge statement: Chair presented a draft statement and after discussion Chair revised the draft based on the commissioners' comments. Statement follows.

TO: Frank Smerliglio, Wilton Town Engineer, Priti Bhardwaj/DOT

Cc: Michael Wrinn/Planning & Zoning; Robert Sanders/ Wilton ARB; Mary Dunne/SHPO; Marena Wisnewski/SHPO; Stacey Vairo/Preservation CT; Priti Bhardwaj/CT DOT

FROM: Historic District Commission

DATE: November 9, 2020

RE: DOT Project # 0161-0142 Replacement of Bridge # 04975 Lovers Lane, Wilton

This statement represents an initial response from the HDC pending additional

review of documents, studies and design plans for the Lover's Lane Bridge.

Requests:

The HDC requests a clear chart or timeline that maps out when the different design phases are set to occur and when/how input from the HDC commission should occur. Please provide a list of signatories and potential signatories for the Section 106 review and provide a list of the various consulting parties.

Please advise as to when the HDC will see a schematic rendering of the proposed bridge design.

Comments:

The 1930s Lover's Lane bridge over Comstock Brook is located in an historic area which encompasses some of Wilton's best known and well-preserved structures, including the Wilton Congregational Church and the Wilton PlayShop, the mill dam and the historic Lover's Lane neighborhood. The area is designated as the Wilton Center National Register District. The National district includes Local Historic District #2, which is directly adjacent to the bridge. The scale and existing character of the area demands that the bridge have an appropriate size and aesthetic character in tune with its surroundings.

The Historic District Commission urges that the new design: **Minimize** the width of the replacement bridge.

The road is narrow, and the existing bridge is 16' in width. The HDC advocates a replacement width that is appropriate based on traffic studies which capture actual, not estimated, recent vehicle counts. The smaller the footprint of the bridge, the less damage to existing natural and historic structures impact on surrounding areas.

Minimize the visual impact of the replacement bridge.

Use natural materials as much as possible, including true stone facings which match the character and aesthetic of the stonework around and part of the existing bridge structure. Formed stone/cast concrete is unacceptable.

Timber-beam guide rails along the roadway would be acceptable. Replacement of the existing stone walls with true stone walls of the same character is preferable.

Expand views of Comstock Brook with an aesthetically pleasing rail design which permits maximum views of the river.

Minimize the removal or destruction of existing mature trees and stone walls. **Minimize** temporary bridge impact on 10 Lover's Lane property by disturbing as little as

possible, and by providing a sympathetic plan with native plants to restore the landscape. **Minimize** the taking of land from 80 Ridgefield Road, which is in LHD #2.

III.　　Public Comment:

Michael Craig spoke of the residents' concerns about the scale and design of the proposed replacement bridge and submitted comments in writing as well as follows.

Thank you again for all you are doing!!

I just watched the minutes from the ARB meeting and appreciate everything that is being done on that front as well, and from an aesthetic perspective. The progress on the potential for a stone arch bridge was great.

On scale: that meeting resulted in the bridge being set at 22' vs. 24' wide. There were other positive developments, but I think the 22' should still receive significant scrutiny -- specifically the quality of the data that decisioning is based upon. I offer the below for committee consideration:

I am attaching a traffic study that I got from Frank Smeriglio on Friday. This study was conducted by the Wilton Police for some other reason back in 2019. I wanted to make sure you all saw this, and heard from the community, that I believe agree with me, that these numbers seem impossibly inflated at 500 average daily vehicles per day, and highest numbers approaching 600-800 per day (!)

This traffic report is being taken as gospel and foundational for scale decisions. We believe we should scrutinize this a great deal more than we are. Were there unusual events being held at Merwin on those two days? Were there other circumstances in those two weeks that would have driven that traffic up to be unusually high? We believe these are reasonable questions and there does not seem to be an appropriate level of scrutiny going against this traffic data. As homeowners who live here, we don't believe 600-800 is even possible, and if it was, it would be highly, highly unusual. If you were to take seasonality into account, there is no way we broach 400+ per day.

We haven't gotten much of an acknowledgement on this. Our request for a specific/current study was quickly dismissed on the initial call with DOT, and **while I very much want to recognize all the positive developments thus far (thank you!!)**, I think it's **worth questioning this as it is the singular thing that is driving the size and scale pf the bridge. At any rate, I thought this committee would be interested.**

Adrianne Schoetz asked about notification for future Town Commissions meetings about the bridge and was advised how to be notified and attend.

IV.   Adjournment: 6:04 pm

Next meeting December 1, 2020 7:30 pm

Submitted by Gil Weatherly, Clerk