



Town of Chatham
Department of
Principal Projects and Operations



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INTER-OFFICE MEMORANDUM

DATE: February 1, 2013

TO: Jill Goldsmith, Town Manager

FROM: Terence M. Whalen, Administrator

RE: **BOS Agenda Item 2/5/13**
West Chatham Roadway Design Project Update
Public Participation Plan

As part of the continuing efforts to develop a 25% design for the West Chatham Roadway Design Project to submit to MassDOT, the next public involvement milestone is approaching. The Town's designer for the project, Howard/Stein-Hudson (HSH) Associates, Inc. was selected specifically for their public involvement experience and capacity. HSH in concert with Town staff have developed the attached Public Participation Plan as the means of delivering on Chatham's commitment to public involvement and to achieving a successful project.

Preparations are underway to embark on implementing this plan, with early March targets for continued public input opportunities on the West Chatham Roadway Design Project. The goal of this plan is to reach reasonable agreement and solidify support for the project as advised by MassDOT through conducting coordinated public outreach efforts to gain input from abutters, neighborhood associations, property and business owners, and the community at large.

cc: *Sarah Peake, State Representative*
Sue Rohrbach, District Director for State Senator Dan Wolf,
Pam Haznar, P.E., District Project Development Engineer – MassDOT
Glenn Cannon, Technical Services, CCC
Deanna Ruffer, Director – Chatham Community Development Department
Jeff Colby, Director – Chatham DPW
Keri Pyke, P.E., PTOE – Principal/Director of Transportation Planning - HSH

Public Involvement Goals and Overall Approach

The goal is to provide a public involvement process that actively seeks community input to help refine the final design of the West Chatham Roadway and Intersection Design Project. The Town's consultant, Howard/Stein-Hudson (HSH) will work closely with the Town to achieve reasonable agreement as to how best to redesign the section of Route 28 between the intersections of George Ryder Road and Barnhill Road. This work will take place within the context of the Town's broader Route 28 Corridor Visioning Project. HSH will work closely with the Town to ensure that the public understand both the distinct and overlapping elements of the two efforts. With regard to the intersections and roadway between George Ryder and Barnhill Roads, it is recognized that all parties involved are unlikely to arrive at unanimous agreement on the final design. The objective is to solidify broad based support and understanding of the design concept and details, thus allowing the project to move forward in the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) process. Public involvement efforts for this project will be organized into two interconnected and mutually-supporting tracks:

1. Face-to-face outreach efforts including:
 - Briefings for state and local officials;
 - Listening sessions with members of the community;
 - Broadly advertised meetings with members of the community; and,
 - A series of key informant interviews to be held in Chatham.
2. Virtual outreach including a project website and a Facebook page. This effort will serve as an ongoing, two-way line of communication:
 - Between the project team and the general public, broadcasting new information and gathering input; and
 - Before and between public information meetings.

The Public Involvement Process

Key Informant Interviews

HSH will begin the public involvement process by holding three days of "office hours" in a neutral location to be designated by the Town using a questionnaire protocol developed by HSH with input from the Town. These interviews also provide an opportunity to gather information of benefit to the separate Corridor Visioning Project the Town is undertaking for a larger but inclusive section of Route 28. At the same time it is important to ensure that those to be interviewed understand that these two projects, while having a geographic overlap, have very different and distinct purposes. As a result, it is expected that HSH and/or the Town may consult with the Cape Cod Commission, the entity assisting the Town with the Corridor Visioning project, during the development of the questionnaire content and protocol.

The office hours will consist of the project's public involvement specialist conducting brief interviews with abutting residents, business and property owners, and other stakeholders to take the community's pulse regarding the project. These interviews will be broadly advertised and open to all. In addition,

HSH under the Town's direction will reach out to those who have been active in the project to date and specifically invite them to be interviewed. The findings of these interviews will be summarized by HSH in a memo which can be used by the Town and project team to guide the rest of the public involvement process. The results will also be shared with the Cape Cod Commission for use as appropriate in the Route 28 Corridor Visioning Project. It is anticipated that the key informant interviews will take place in early March, 2013.

Digital Outreach

Over the past several years, HSH has created a number of successful websites for an array of projects in Massachusetts, New York, and New Jersey. Development of such a website is included as one of the key outreach methods for this project. The site will have its own unique address, easy to remember, and appearance developed by HSH and approved by the Town of Chatham. This unique appearance helps to define the project and give it an identity in the eyes of the community at large. A prominent link to the Town's website will be displayed to ensure a clear connection between the project and the Town of Chatham. The project website will serve as:

- A 24-hour point of contact for the project, allowing members of the public to learn about the project on their own time outside of scheduled public meetings;
- A method to ensure that the project maintains a community presence before and between public meetings;
- One of several methods through which members of the community can learn about upcoming public meetings;
- A repository for project documents such as presentations and minutes of meetings; and
- A mechanism through which members of the public can add themselves to the stakeholder database and mailing list.

This website will include a brief introduction that explains the scope of the West Chatham Intersections Design Project and also provides information about the Route 28 Corridor Visioning Project that is simultaneously being undertaken by the Town, including providing a link to more information about this separate project.

HSH anticipates beginning work on the project website roughly in tandem with the key informant interviews and launching it within approximately one month of the end of the office hours. As the project grows and develops, we expect the website to keep pace with it, making changes and adding materials as appropriate. During the website's initial operation, HSH will coordinate closely with the Town of Chatham regarding what materials are made available. As the project moves forward, we anticipate that basic maintenance functions such as the posting of meeting minutes will become automatic, requiring minimal Town input. The website will include an FAQ page which will be updated regularly and used as a primary avenue through which questions routinely raised by the community can be answered. One of the first documents to be posted to the project website will be a fact sheet, developed by HSH under the direction of the Town. This fact sheet will be made available throughout the community both digitally and in print.

HSH anticipates amplifying the impact of the project website with a Facebook page for the project. Facebook has proven to be a useful tool for monitoring community thoughts about the project and allowing public feedback between meetings. It also serves as an additional avenue for the project team to notify users of upcoming meetings.

Drawing from the list of interviewees, interested parties visiting the project website and attendees at the public meetings, HSH will build & maintain a data base of interested parties. This database will be developed in such a way as to be sortable so that it can support required notifications as the intersection design project advances and construction begins. The database will include, but not be limited to, local and state regulatory agencies, abutters, and property and business owners.

Meetings

HSH will also conduct a face-to-face public involvement effort, to be supplemented by the digital path outlined previously, with both the general public and state and local officials.

State and Local Officials

HSH expects to brief state and local officials on the status of the work twice over the course of the project. Our experience suggests holding these briefings in the first and final third of the project. By meeting with state and local officials, we will not only ensure that their thoughts and concerns are incorporated into the project, but will help the project to gain the public's trust by working closely with their local leaders. State and local officials, both elected and appointed, will be added to the project's mailing list and encouraged to attend public meetings. HSH will assist take the lead in preparing the materials for these briefings such as handouts and PowerPoint presentations and document the meeting through the production of minutes. These materials will also be added to the project documents section of the project website.

The General Public

We anticipate meeting with the general public up to five times over the course of the project. It is anticipated public meetings will be held one-third and two-thirds of the way through the design process for development of the required 25% design submittal to MassDOT. The first of the meetings will be a listening session. The level of presentation made by HSH and the Town will be minimal and the goal will be primarily to continue the information gathering effort launched through the key informant interviews. HSH anticipates that this listening session will help to "clear the air" and dispel some of the tension associated with the recently concluded planning process. Following the listening session, we anticipate holding up to three large public meetings.

- At the first meeting, we expect to present the community with a review of the project team's findings regarding current conditions, the initial design work that has been done based on the guidance provided by the Board of Selectmen regarding the preferred design concept, and the findings of the key informant interviews and listening sessions.

- At the second meeting the design that is anticipated to be advanced to MassDOT will be shared with the public with input sought on design elements which have been determined to be of public and community interest based on the interviewing process, the input provided at the first public meeting, and digital input provided over the course of the project. If at the conclusion of this meeting, there are aspects of the design that require further evaluation and public review, a third public meeting will be scheduled prior to completion of the 25% design plans to be submitted to MassDOT.

The scheduling of these will take into consideration public input process that is a part of the Route 28 Corridor Visioning Project with the goal of trying to keep the meetings for each project at least three weeks apart from the meetings being held in conjunction with the other project.

HSH will take the lead in developing the materials for these briefings such as handouts and PowerPoint presentations and document the meeting through the production of minutes. The minutes would be posted the website along with copies of the presentation made for the meeting so that members of the community unable to attend the meeting could participate by reading these materials and then commenting through one of the digital methods previously outlined.

Working with the Town of Chatham

It is our goal to conduct a public involvement process that solicits and makes real use of community input while also recognizing that the Chatham Board of Selectmen have provided concrete direction on the design concept to be advanced based on the public involvement and planning processes that have occurred to date. We believe that throughout the process, but especially at the outset, it will be important to show that the project team and Town are open to community input having an impact on the project's outcome. Given the high level of interest already attending the project to date, meaningful community participation will be extremely difficult to achieve if stakeholders develop a broadly-shared opinion that they are being used as a "rubber stamp." At all steps of the process, we will work closely with the Town to ensure that materials given to the public are accurate and aligned with the Town's goals. During the project, we will keep in touch with the Town regularly by telephone and email. At times, such as immediately before key milestones in the project, we anticipate traveling to Chatham to meet with Town staff members face-to-face. If at any point during the public involvement process you have questions or concerns, please feel free to contact us. We look forward to working with you on this exciting project.