

TOWN OF OAK BLUFFS
DOWNTOWN STREETSCAPE MASTER PLAN COMMITTEE
December 1, 2014

MEETING MINUTES

BOARD MEMBERS:

Brian Packish, Chair
Doug Abdelnour
Erik Albert
Amy Billings
Duncan Ross
John Bradford
Gail Barmakian

ATTENDEES:

Mark Hanover
Christine Todd (OBA)
Christine Flynn
Craig Lowe

The meeting of the Downtown Streetscape Master Plan Committee was called to order by Chairman, Brian Packish at 1:06 PM in the Town Hall Meeting Room at 56 School Street in Oak Bluffs, MA.

Brian Packish: Down to the final Calibrated goal: *Item #: Improve the SSA ferry arrival welcome experience.* We have Mark Hanover and he is Island Representative for the SSA.

Way Finding is the biggest piece of the SSA ferry arrival experience.

Erik Albert We would like signage as you exit the boat, directing people to the police station to vacate people away from the area, a sign indicating the location of the restrooms, taxi's and buses.

Amy Billings Erik where would we put the map?

Mark Hanover Amy and I were talking would be nice to have a WELCOME TO OB on rafters as you're getting off the boat

Brian Packish There's a great location, I took a picture on the giant set of trusses. It is the first piece of structure you see where you can put a WELCOME TO OAK BLUFFS sign

Mark Hanover It would be helpful if we went down there and walked around and get Bridgette, she knows the flow

Erik Albert We need bathroom signage on both sides of the building.
Map of the Vineyard with a map of OB specific and a billboard of the map as well as a take away.

Amy Billings Any chance the Steamship would contribute to signage, map, anything?

Mark Hanover To signage, yes

Brian Packish We think incorporating into the SSA welcoming experience is the railing that connects right at the end of the steamship when you come down the gangplank on the left hand side. That metal three pole railing that runs all the way down the beach. We are talking about potentially replacing that. Is that on CPC?

Amy Billings No, it's basically in the free cash but, it has to be done and we are just replacing it with what is there because that is all we can afford to do. We are not looking for input, design or color etc. Sorry

Amy Billings Until Conservation comes up with the whole bluff renovation... Right now it just has to be fixed.

Brian Packish How does that affect him (Mark Hanover SSA)

Amy Billings I don't think it does, it's going to get done. I believe they are planning to do the whole thing from SSA all the way down.

Brian Packish I'm not thinking it is a SSA expense. Line items is *SSA welcome experience* and some items you be able to do like signage or just the flexibility of participating and willingness to fund any portion of it, that is even better.

Erik Albert Suggested the SSA give an enthusiastic announcement on the ferry welcoming people to the beautiful Town of Oak Bluffs, etc.

Mark Hanover I think a recording is better than relying on the employees to deliver the appropriate announcement. They are required to give the safety announcement and that is all. Recommend a pre-recorded announcement.

Brian Packish Discussed the possibility of handouts and maps on the boat. I know it was discussed in the Way Finding Committee.

Mark Hanover They rent spaces. Chamber of Commerce has a couple and the people renting the spaces are responsible for keeping them up.

Brian Packish There are potential rental spaces available on the boat?

DISCUSSION: Tour Buses

Doug Abdelnour Off track, how do the tour buses parked out there and how are the tickets sold to the tours?

Mark Hanover The tour buses are an absolute pain. Scott, they buy one space in VH and there are two spaces and they paid 5K last year. They are entitled to one space usually they use two. They are supposed to be directing people into the

terminal and also into Woods Hole to buy bus tickets so the SSA makes about \$2.00 per tour. Several times they were just directing them cash straight onto the bus going around the SSA.

In Oak Bluffs, the SSA has nothing to do with those two spaces across the street by the police station. We did have a problem with them parking on SSA property.

- Doug Abdelnour You guys own the parking lot, correct.
- Gail Barmakian No this is all town.
- Mark Hanover Doug that map is accurate. The SSA leases all the queueing area from the town and has nothing to do with anything across the street.
- Doug Abdelnour Can tickets be bought on the bus for the towns?
- Mark Hanover In Vineyard Haven, yes. I don't know about Oak Bluffs.
- Doug Abdelnour Is there advertising on the ferry?
- Mark Hanover They have someone who walks around the ferry and sells tour tickets
- Doug Abdelnour If they are buying the tickets in Woods Hole and on the Island Queen, What is the harm if we put the buses down by his property, and at least the people are not coming off the boat and seeing the buses.
- Gail Barmakian We approached him with that and actually what we wanted to do change the spaces to Uncas to force people to walk downtown and to schedule the buses an hour or two after the boat. That was met with a lot of resistance
- Brian Packish When he was here he said he had no problem with the buses parked on his property because the buses were sold out from tickets on the boats. The amount he sells at the buses is negligible to what sells at the boats.
- Mark Hanover I don't think he does that good on the boats.
- Doug Abdelnour Ticket hawking, we need a system that keeps people in town, instead of busing out of town
- Gail Barmakian Reorganizing town bus parking
Adjust tour schedule
Create a venue to keep people in town
- Amy Billings If he puts them on his property it is already a congested area
Maybe the town could provide him spaces up at the end of Circuit Ave – not free as a draw

Erik Albert Back to SSA:
 Proper cleaning of the seating area(s)
 I emailed this picture to the SSA

Gail Barmakian I wanted to know about the SSA flexibility to incorporate into SSA budget, sharing the cost of off-site parking and bus parking.

Mark Hanover Spoke to Bob and advised him that the town has to come up with a budget that I can submit to the Board and see what we can do.

Gail Barmakian Can you incorporate into your present budget or do we have to wait another year for your next budget depending on the numbers. Is there flexibility?

Mark Hanover We just have to be very careful. We gave Nantucket 50K last year for the most expensive bus service I have ever heard of in my life. We split it with Tisbury, but we look at that as off-site parking lot for the SSA and we pay the VTA about 70K a year which is half of what it cost to operate that bus.

Gail Barmakian But you don't rent the town property at all

Mark Hanover We are having issues with the town now because they want to start charging for parking and that isn't our deal.

Brian Packish You can't charge and be subsidized. The system works

Mark Hanover The reason we are contributing is to provide free parking for our customers. The initial reason they did that Park & Ride was to get all the cars out of town for all the people going on the boats. Now they want to put up a gate and start charging.

Mark Hanover The system is going to cost 125K I would like to see the return on that.

Amy Billings A good chunk of year round people use the Park & Ride to go on the Steamship and in OB we would only be a few months. That's why VH pays half they are helping their employees, etc.

Mark Hanover It's more up island people.

Brian Packish The line *Item #4; Improve the SSA ferry arrival welcome experience.*

 We have a few additions here:

1. Additional Way Finding at the ticket office with a larger sign by the police station, bathroom signage for the restrooms inside the SSA terminal
2. Welcome sign at the SSA entrance for pedestrians exiting the boat ramp
3. Explore potential rental spaces for OB literature

4. Review of bus parking rental spaces possible relocation of buses

CONTINUED DISCUSSION OF BUS PARKING LOCATION AND USE OF SPACE OFF PEAK HOURS

- Brian Packish People don't know, can we put a sign there – parking after hours.
Amy Billings Why would we tell anyone?
Gail Barmakian Open a can of worms with liability
Brian Packish Okay, I see the liability
- Mark Hanover I suggest committee talk to Scott Daniels regarding buses leaving OB and sitting for over an hour in ED.
- Amy Billings Mark, part of the Way Finding Committee is to place signs that will inform pedestrians how much time it takes to go here and there , allowing them the option of scheduling day trips or outings according to the time, bus and boat schedules
- Doug Abdelnour Mark, the bathrooms the town provides everyone must think they are the SSA bathrooms, do you get complaints? I just want to know where people voice their complaints. I would like to know what kind of feedback you get. I know Todd is overwhelmed at the Harbor with complaints about how bad the bathrooms are.
- Mark Hanover I don't know, Bridgette Tobin would know.
- Brian Packish We talked about the potential of scheduling a walk around and that Bridgette would be a good person to have there.
- Mark Hanover It's her terminal and she knows the flow.
- Brian Packish Would you be able to reach out and facilitate some dialogue and maybe we can figure out. It is a meeting so we have to post it and we need 48 hours. We generally meet on Monday's at 1:00 PM and next Monday, December 8, 2014
- DISCUSSION:
- Brian Packish We added for *Item #4; Improve the SSA ferry arrival welcome experience.*
1. Increased cleanliness on the boats
 2. OB specific announcements with a little excitement
- Christine Todd Mark, what do you feel would enhance a better pedestrian experience in OB and make it more welcoming? Is there enough seating?
- Mark Hanover Amy and I were talking about a sign on the bulkhead WELCOME TO Oak BLUFFS. First question we get is where are the bathrooms and then where is town?

Christine Todd Is there enough seating?

DISCUSSION:

Gail Barmakian Do we want them to sit – we want them to move
Brian Packish I see the most people waiting over toward our public bathrooms
Mark Hanover What a vast improvement they have already made over there.
Brian Packish The new plan is really great
Gail Barmakian There is a little park over there.
Brian Packish Flatter and level with more seating. Good size area 3000 SF and it addresses the issues
Doug Abdelnour And they are not crossing the street

Amy Billings Mark did you say he only has one bus stop there
Mark Hanover There are two bus stops there I believe he only uses one.

Gail Barmakian When is the last boat at night
Mark Hanover 8:45 PM
Gail Barmakian Can the town use that for parking
Mark Hanover Yes

Brian Packish Will contact Scott Dario and ask him to attend next week's meeting and walk through.

DISCUSSION:

Mark Hanover We are going to spend about 1M this year on repairs on the dock.
Gail Barmakian Are you thinking about water level rise, the dock had to be adjusted for the fishing pier

Amy Billings Are you making any progress in getting more boats to OB? Longer season.

Mark Hanover No, a longer season maybe. Extend a week

Gail Barmakian What does it take to extend the season, is it a big deal

Mark Hanover Yes, you got nine boats to get in out of dry dock, serviced etc.
Getting them ready. People complaining there isn't enough space.
People have told him I don't care what it cost we should have access to get on and off the island. He advised and requested they write letters.

On Columbus Day they just dropped the ball went from four to three boats.
So next year they will continue one of the big boats for another week and keep the Governor on call. Very bad weekend for season ending October 14th
There were two weeks where it was impossible to get a boat.

The misconception that the rates change for islanders in October – but they change on September 15th.

As islanders we pay 37% of the actual cost for every space. Operating cost is actually 63% higher than what islanders pay in the off season. This summer the New Bedford ferries are only coming into OB. (no longer docking in VH).

DISCUSSION: New Bedford Ferry Occupancy and Rates

SSA CONTINUED

Christine Flynn Mark I have two questions: What is the background and can you tell us the purpose for the Embarkation Fees?

Mark Hanover The purpose for the Embarkation Fees are to help the towns with any tourist created expenses that are incurred from the people coming here is the letter of the law. Falmouth puts it in their general fund. Tisbury up to now has done the best job because they have a committee and they have the parameters and the committee goes to town meeting with their suggestions. I screamed and yelled when they used it for a fire truck. That is when they put the committee together. The Embarkation Fee can be used for parks, restrooms VTA buses extra police details anything like that.

Amy Billings Right now it is all going to the police
Brian Packish and to also cover some debt service on something
Christine Flynn We receive about \$80K
Mark Hanover No we came in about 230K you receive about 180K

Christine Flynn Standby ?
Mark Hanover No standby on the weekends during the season
Christine Flynn Is there any consideration to reverse that? (now that we have the Island Home)

Doug Abdelnour What is the mysterious blue line?
Mark Hanover If you are an island resident and you have already come off they will take up to five or seven cars during the summer time, called the blue line and they will get you to get you on

Brian Packish Basically *stand by* for residents
Christine Flynn As a matter of policy would the SSA consider reversing that?
Mark Hanover I don't know, it has eliminated an enormous amount of chaos in Woods Hole
Doug Abdelnour I think Wood Hole since that has died. You received no gripes about it.
Mark Hanover Some business stated we absolutely killed them with no standbys and then there are people who don't want the SSA there.

Gail Barmakian Did the SSA have anything to do with the blacktop, asphalt border down to the water?

Mark Hanover No

Christine Todd If the SSA won't consider extending the season, will they consider the SSA providing a shuttle to bring tourist to and from OB? Steamship VH to Steamship OB.

Mark Hanover If boats are cancelled out of OB the cars will still be staged in OB?
If there are back-ups, will stage in OB

Amy Billings Left the meeting

Brian Packish I feel we have more cancellations than ever: Why so many?
Who determines when the boat is cancelled?

Mark Hanover The Captain determines the coming/going. Cancellations are also determined
by the docking ability of the vessel.

Bridgette fights for the boats. On windy days go down there and see the
ropes – it is amazing they hold the boats. Coast Guard can also make the call
– in the event of the hurricane and if the boat is in the New Bedford hurricane
barrier, at that point only the Coast Guard can say it is okay to go again.

DISCUSSION: Regarding the Island Home and its Worthiness

Brian Packish What we saw with the Thanksgiving weather – is that the first time you have
run additional boats ahead of the weather?

Mark Hanover Yes it's the first time, it was on Channel 5 News, Cape Cod Times and they
had a bank of operators calling people that had reservations and email blast.
The boats stopped running at five o'clock. If there had not been so much
ruckus Columbus Day I am not so sure it would have been done. This is the
first time pro-active. We tried they even refunded to anyone who could not
make the trip. No charge for changed reservations. There is a mindset
change over there.

Brian Packish Regarding an extended season into OB. Typically, you have a day count as
to what makes seasonal and what makes full time. Is that part of the
motivation for not running a later season?

Mark Hanover Yes, absolutely. I have to check into that. We have a meeting on December
9th with the full board. If I don't get the answers before next Monday, I will
have them then.

Erik Albert If you can expand social media, like twitter, be more pro-active? Advise
when boats are not running. You would be surprised how effective.

Mark Hanover Our IT is embarrassing.

Erik Albert One issue in OB is they don't post cancellations in a timely manner.

Mark Hanover WIFI on the boats has not been cost effective. We don't have the right
people in the right place. I talked to Lane Lanson today because I am tired of
hearing about the internet on the boats. There is a reason it is not working, it
has been a problem for two years. The easy solution is to go to satellites,

which is 3K a boat. End of spending \$250K a year for internet, either take the signs down or do it right. Get a consultant and figure it out.

NOTE TO BRIAN:

Did not finalize *Item #4; Improve the SSA ferry arrival welcome experience.*

We added for *Item #4; Improve the SSA ferry arrival welcome experience.*

1. Increased cleanliness on the boats
2. OB specific announcements with a little excitement

ADJOURNMENT NOT ON TAPE JUST IN THE NOTES

MOTION TO ADJOURN @ 2:10 PM:

SECOND:

VOTE:

Christine Flynn

Duncan Ross

7-0-0