

Highway 104 at Antigonish
Community Liaison Committee Meeting
September 20, 2010

Attendees:

Trudy Spooner
Ken Donnelly
Brian Segal
Dwayne Cross
Heather Mayhew
John Bain
Roger Garby
Ian McCallum
Ken Proctor
Len Robertson
Gerry Grant
Alisha Grant
Bill MacFarlane
Debbie Kampen

Regrets:

Hugh MacDonald
Mary McCarron
Anne-Marie MacKenzie
Rose Julian

1. Gateway Update by ARDA

Gerry and Alisha gave a brief update on the Gateway planning. There is currently a planning committee in place which is functioning well. They issued an RFP to do public consultation in July and subsequently hired E-kistics. E-kistics has since conducted 20-25 one on one interviews, conducted an online survey, held a public consultation and issued a newsletter. They are still conducting interviews for anybody who wishes to still provide input. Soon, E-kistics will be putting together a preliminary report outlining their findings. Their research consists of finding out what makes Antigonish unique, what people want to see as a gateway, and what is important for tourists. Some of the themes they are hearing are: cultural and community focused, St. FX University, vibrant downtown and "a big little town".

During this update it was mentioned that in Antigonish there are many things happening at the same time: E-kistics research, bylaw development, and town planning. It does not seem as though there is communication between these groups. Since much of the land under development is provincially owned, perhaps more group integration should be considered. However, it was noted that the Town Counsel is in communication with many of these groups so there is an open dialogue occurring.

Though the CLC is not directly involved in Gateway planning it was noted that many CLC members are involved through other organizations in this endeavour. CLC members may be approached about this by members of the public and it would be ideal if CLC members had a place they could direct people to.

ACTION ITEM: Place a link to the E-kistics research on the CLC Website

2. West River Bridge Update

Dwayne gave an update of the West River Bridge.

- The redesign is 50% complete
- The completed date is October 15th and is on schedule
- The next step is a tender call, which should be done in November
- The redesign is still not expected to affect the overall schedule of the highway

3. Native Plant Collection

Ian gave an update on the Native Plant Collection.

- 3 plants (Canada lily, Coffee tinkers weed, Wood nettle) have been found in the area.
- Consultants collected samples of each plant and took them to the Acadian cloning facility.
- Only the Canada lily was successful. The other two plants had an infection of some kind and were not viable.
- Some of the lilies will be planted, and some will be kept for the collection at Acadia, plus there will be some transplants done.
- Consultants are going to look for seeds from the two other plants. They want to rescue the plants from where they will be disturbed and grow them in a new area.
- The consultants are also going to collect native vegetation and soil (in pots) to preserve them, and then transplant the whole system (plants and soil) into the new area. This will help the plants as many of the microorganisms that support their development will be transplanted as well.
- The consultants are also going to remove as many invasive species as possible.

- This is currently in progress.
- The work is part of an agreement within the EA. It is part of compensating for the plants disturbed because of the right-of-way.

4. Federal and Provincial EAs

Ian explained the difference between Federal and Provincial EAs

Similarities:

- The details of what are in a Federal and Provincial EA are essentially the same

Differences:

- Provincially there is a schedule I and II
- In some instances, the province will say “If you want to do X, then you need an EA”, so there are specific triggers for provincial EAs.
- Federally, EAs are triggered when the government gives money, sells land, or gives a permit. Eg. when fish habitat is disturbed there will be an EA, or if there if funding given.
- The authorities to which the NSTIR is responsible to for this project are DFO, Navigable Waters and Transport Canada.

General:

- It is not the proponent (us) who does the EA, it is the agency. The agencies will agree on what the scope is, and then the provincial and federal agencies will try to coordinate the EA with each other.
- For this project, when the bridge was redesigned we asked if the EA needed to be redone but the province said no. Federally, Ian thought that there was going to be an EA due to fish habitat disturbance, but now the DFO is saying another EA is not necessary. However, Transport Canada have not said no yet. Currently, Ian doesn't know if we'll need a Federal EA.
- We will still have to do more compensation for the HADD (disturbing fish habitat)
- The EA is for the project as a whole. There are other checks and balances in place for changes, such as changing the bridge. Permits and licensing help make sure the project remains compliant.

In this discussion concerns were raised that there may not be sufficient planning for draining water off of the hard surfaces. The land where the road will be built is currently absorbent, but won't be after the road is paved. It is important to know where the water can be drained to and how to offset the loss of absorbing surfaces. In response to this concern it was noted that drainage is a municipal jurisdiction and has more to do with storm water systems.

Ken Proctor mentioned that the drainage system can be temporary and change. Sean (working with the municipality) is going to look at the drainage systems and if they are effective. He will be using LIDAR and the resources at COGS for this. There is currently no timeline on this study. Funding is still an issue, but if funding comes through then the study will go ahead. The study would also be part of the long term planning strategy for Antigonish.

5. Wetland Update

Ian gave an update on wetlands.

- The big wetland at Addington Forks has encountered some unforeseen problems.
- The original design included some intrusion but designers realized that the clay could move and cause the road to fail, so they decided to build a berm to fix this.
- The berm was built using soil from the hill nearby. When they finished it, it turns out the soft clay beneath the surface bulged significantly and lifted up a portion of the wetland.
- In the current condition, the lifted part will eventually drain and support red maples, but will no longer be wetland.
- In discussions with wetland specialists it has been determined that this can be fixed, but a plan of action has not yet been created. However, the land will be restored and in the meantime, other wetland compensation will be carried out – in keeping with Nova Scotia's no net loss policy.

Action Item: Get information on the area of disturbed land

6. Planning for the Open House

- The Open House will be held on October 6th from 6-9pm (room booked from 5-10pm) at the Millennium Centre in the upstairs conference room.
- This is being held based on the recommendation from Nova Scotia Environment that public consultation be held regarding the redesign of the West River Bridge.
- There will be a number of information stations, each with fact sheets/maps/handouts, and staffed by a project expert to can answer questions.
- The advantage of this style of event is that it does not become overly acrimonious, or dominated by people with only one view point.
- The West River Bridge will be the prominent topic of discussion, but this is a good forum for delivering other information about the project.
- Both the 241m span and the 140m span will be displayed.
- There will also be a form for commenting so that people who attend can leave written comments. These will be collected and compiled after the event.

- We need to get experts to staff the event. Some suggestions included: Mark Paulsifer, Charlie McInnes, Hanz _____, and Harry Damon
- The purpose of the Open House is to hear if there are any public concerns or ideas. It will also help the public understand what is happening and say what they think

7. Project Update

Roger Garby gave a brief update

- Nova at Agriforks is basically complete
- The section here is going quickly. We just need the connection to the highway
- Still need to connect the sewers
- Hopefully tender the West River Bridge in November
- At the end of next year everything should be done but the paving

8. Next Meeting

October 20, 2010