

Minutes of West Fairlee Selectboard Slaughterhouse Road Reclassification Hearing February 20, 2010

Present from the Selectboard: Bonnie Cray, Beverly Ash, and Doug Sonsalla

Visitors: John Blake and Jonathan Blake (J&J Blake Excavating), Jim Brigham, Corey and Julie Paye

The meeting was called to order at 1:10 pm at Slaughterhouse Road.

Cray provided meeting members with documentation regarding the road reclassification process and the road classification definitions. Sonsalla explained the reclassification process including the hearing, decision rendering by the board, and opportunity for property owners to petition the decision. Sonsalla noted that the planning commission had been invited to attend the hearing. Sonsalla explained that Slaughterhouse Road is a Class 4 road mandating that bridges and culverts be maintained by the Town. Sonsalla indicated that the Slaughterhouse Road bridge is not currently on the VTrans maps and that the end of the road was vaguely described.

Jonathan Blake pointed out stakes marking the location of the 49.5 foot right of way along the road. Jonathan Blake indicated that the ownership of the bridge was unclear and given that the road is inaccessible by vehicular traffic anyway, property owners may take an interest in obtaining ownership of the road from the Town. John Blake questioned the value of the ownership of the road to the Town and mentioned that the Town did not construct the bridge.

Ash indicated that members of her family formerly owned the property now home of the Payes and indicated that the bridge was historically used to access a slaughterhouse located beyond the bridge. Ash indicated that the bridge ownership was assumed to be linked to the property owner of the Paye's existing parcel.

Corey Paye indicated that he did not believe that the bridge was mentioned in their property deed. Paye discussed the benefit of the bridge for access to the property beyond for recreation and the snowmobile club. Paye indicated that public access had always been granted; however, the ownership liability of the bridge was a concern.

Sonsalla discussed the potential reclassifications including private ownership, trail, or remaining as a Class 4. John Blake suggested that the road be split between abutting property owners if changed to private ownership. Ash indicated that the abutting properties should be surveyed to determine ownership.

Sonsalla asked whether the meeting members had a preference on the future classification of the road. Corey Paye suggested that the road be classified as a trail or given to private ownership. Julie Paye concurred. John Blake suggested that the road be made private and possibly maintained by funds through the snowmobile club. Blake also indicated the benefit of the removal of the Town right of way, which current prohibits abutting property owners from building in the right of way or performing any work without Town approval.

Lewis-Poulin discussed the benefit of public access to the bridge for recreational use and suggested that the Town pay to maintain the road.

Ash suggested selling the bridge to the snowmobile club. Jonathan Blake suggested classifying the road as a trail. John Blake pointed out that the private land ownership on either side of the bridge making recreational use subject to prior property owner approval.

Sonsalla asked again if there were preferences on classification. Lewis-Poulin responded a preference for Class 4 and Town maintenance of the bridge. Corey Paye expressed interest in private ownership. Julie Paye suggested the potential to maintain the bridge/road with the snowmobile club as a trail. Sonsalla clarified that the Town would still own a right of way if the road were classified as a trail, however, 49.5 feet would no longer be required. Corey Paye expressed concern that the right of way would hinder his property use. Jonathan Blake discussed the potential future modifications of the road if the property beyond the bridge were to be developed. The road access would be modified for vehicular traffic. Corey Paye indicated a preference for a trail with a narrow right of way or private ownership of the road.

Jonathan Blake suggested that public access could be deeded with the road if private ownership were provided. Julie Paye expressed liability concerns with the bridge but expressed an interest in the classification of the road as a trail.

John Blake restated that public use would still require permission from abutting property owners.

Motion by Cray to adjourn the meeting. Ash seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Holly Lewis-Poulin
Selectboard Clerk