

Town Council Paper Street Engagement Plan

Introduction

The Town Council has received an updated status report on paper streets in Cape Elizabeth, and legal advice on options. The Town Council extended the town's rights in paper streets in 1997 for 20 years. The town may want to take some action before the 1997 extension expires in 2017. Prior to making a decision on paper streets, the Town Council will undertake a public engagement effort.

Why adopt a Public Engagement Plan?

Town policy and practice includes public comment periods, public hearings and unlimited written comment opportunities for the public to participate in local government decision-making. The treatment of paper streets, however, has generated tremendous public interest, controversy and communal tension. Many paper streets include important public infrastructure and, by their nature, are most often located in compact neighborhoods. These elements merit a special effort by the Town Council to engage the public in a discussion that includes the facts about paper streets and the community's future vision for paper streets.

Public Input Gathering

The paper street engagement process will include three parts, as follows:

Part 1: Review of updated Paper Street Report

The Planning Board and Conservation Commission are requested to conduct a review of the 2015 Paper Street Report. While the Planning Board and the Conservation Commission routinely allow public comment at their meetings, the main focus of Part 1 is a policy recommendation for Town Council consideration. Board recommendations should be prepared expeditiously with the understanding that the main opportunities for public comment are planned for Part 2 and Part 3.

The Conservation Commission should focus on the portion of the report where paper streets are or could be used as additions to the Greenbelt. They should provide a recommendation that includes:

1. A list of paper streets that include existing trails;
2. A list of paper streets that include potential trails to be added to the Greenbelt;

3. A list of paper streets that they recommend should be retained by the town in order to preserve and/or extend the Greenbelt.
4. A list of paper streets that include trails or may include trails that they would not recommend the town retain.

The Planning Board should focus on the need for paper streets to support potential new development in an orderly manner. The board should consider vehicular access, pedestrian access and orderly extension of infrastructure. The Planning Board recommendation should include:

1. A list of paper streets that they recommend should be retained by the town with a description of possible future needs that the paper street may meet.
2. A list of paper streets that they recommend may not be needed.

Part 2: Neighborhood Area Meetings

As part of the Town Council's Citizen Engagement Goals, the Town Council will host 4-6 neighborhood area meetings. Each meeting will focus on one area of town and residents from that area will be asked to comment on a range of local government topics, including paper streets. The neighborhood area meeting is a pilot project of the Town Council to provide another opportunity for meaningful public engagement. Each meeting will include an informational presentation with the bulk of the meeting devoted to public discussion in a less formal format than traditional public hearings.

Part 3: Town Council Public Hearing

The public engagement process will conclude with a traditional public hearing, held at a Town Council meeting, and include legal notice as required by law. The Town Council may also choose to schedule 1 or more workshops to discuss paper streets. The Town Council decision may include both extensions of rights and vacation of rights in paper streets.

Supporting public engagement actions

The town website shall be extensively used to post information about paper streets, including the 2015 Paper Street Report (already on the website), dates of upcoming meetings, agendas of meetings, minutes of meetings and materials developed to support this engagement process.

Conclusion

It is the Town Council's intent to fully vet public needs and opinions before making a decision to serve the needs of all town residents now and in the future.