

Minutes of Bridges and Railroad Committee

September 29, 2014

Members: Bernadette Brier Slawinski, Co-Chairman, Secretary; Roger Rhodes, Co-chairman; Jim Doran. Larry Schell, Ken Thompson, Eric Kurtz, Marshall Jim Reeder, Charles Costanza, Tom Clouser

Present: Bernadette Brier Slawinski, Jim Doran, Larry Schell, Ken Thompson, Charles Costanza, Tom Clouser

1. The meeting was called to order and the minutes from the previous meeting were approved.
2. Larry Schell was welcomed as the new member of the committee.
3. Jim Doran gave an update on the number of trains going by daily and updates regarding the Silent Zone. There are currently a total of 127 trains per day, which includes freight, Amtrak, and the South Shore Trains. There is a six percent increase in freight traffic at this time. The railroad contacts have not evaluated all of their information regarding a Quiet Zone. There will be a meeting with the railroad to discuss options. There is a need for further information from InDOT. There are indications that most groups are willing to work with the town on this issue. Further discussion regarding a Quiet Zone or a Sound Localization System will be discussed when more information is available. Safety issues are considered when installing a Quiet Zone and a high number of trains can be an impediment to this system. There is a need to work with the South Shore if a Sound Localization System is used.
4. Sand Tracks Title – the title search has not been completed to date regarding the ownership of Sand Tracks. There is a dispute between the Town and the NPS.
5. Data regarding the number of stopped trains – No one to report; however, incidental data indicates an increase in blocked gates. At this time the emergency road to the Bridge is open due to the increased train traffic and blocked entrance to the town.
6. Larry Schell discussed an engineering study he is looking into regarding how long the gates are down rather than tracking the number of trains.
7. Procedures for notifying persons on U.S. 12 that the gates are open with discussed.
8. Issues with slow and blocked trains have become a quality of life issue for residents in addition to safety concerns for emergency vehicles.
9. Need for emergency plan was discussed- notification to residents, communication system, possible plans: Plan A, Plan B, Plan C. There are still concerns that people want limited access to entering and exiting Ogden Dunes, while there is increased closing of the entrance due to train traffic.
10. The letter drafted by Susan Mahilo and the Environmental Committee was shared regarding the hazardous materials cargo, the single entrance to town and the impact that a derailment would have on the community including person, wildlife, and delicate vegetation.
11. Bernadette presented a list of issues, problems, resulting from the issues, solutions, obstacles to solutions that are presently impacting the town brought about by the increased train traffic, delays and hazardous cargo. The committee will review these items and discuss at the next meeting.
12. The committee has been invited to attend a meeting with the NPS superintendent and representatives to Portage regarding our shared boundaries and access to the bridge on October 16.
13. Karen Tallian will be invited to attend the next meeting if she is available.
14. Meeting adjourned. Next meeting Monday, October 20, 5:15 p.m., Town Hall.