

THE ROUTE 74 ASSOCIATION

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NEWSLETTER

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Whitman Daniels, Editor

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All sections of the Route 74 area, from Ticonderoga to Schroon Lake, were well represented at the Association's first annual meeting, Friday evening, August 31, 1979 in Schroon Lake's Leland Center.

Association president Whitman Daniels presided and observed at the outset that the occasion marked to the day and the hour the first anniversary of The Route 74 Association which was organized the evening of August 31 last year with eighty-six persons comprising the founding group. Since then the membership has grown, as was reported later by membership chairman Dr. Joseph R. Kane, to 215 persons.

Mr. Daniels also observed that the Association's first year had been one of significant progress. It is serving as a channel of communication between the State and the people concerned about the future of Route 74 so that we will now be kept informed of the State's planning and participate in it. We have also achieved our aim to give unified and effective representation to all persons wanting to preserve the aesthetic, ecological and economic values of the Route 74 area and of Paradox and Eagle Lakes. Consequently, The Route 74 Association will have an important role in safeguarding the qualities of life here which we cherish.

The First Year

The activities of the Association since the organizational meeting were reported by First Vice-President Charles Whitney, beginning with a conference in Albany between Association officers and Commissioner William Hennessey of the State Department of Transportation and his top aides. That parlay prepared the ground for subsequent exploratory discussions with other DOT officials relative to upgrading the existing Route 74 and creating another artery to serve trucks and other through traffic in accordance with the objectives agreed upon in our organizational meeting.

Two possible alternate routes were plotted by a directors' committee of your Association. These routes were travelled by members of the committee with DOT engineers. One route started by the Schroon River bridge on Route 9. The other began at a point approximately opposite Exit 29 on the Northway. Both followed generally existing roads and both came into the existing Route 74 at Chilson.

These proposed alternate routes were then analyzed by the DOT to ascertain their engineering, environmental and construction feasibility. On June 1, R.M. Gardeski, DOT regional design engineer, addressed a detailed five-page report to Mr. Whitney which concluded that the alternate routes proposed by the Association were not feasible. Reasons given were that they would require "a substantial portion of the remaining (Forest Preserve) land in the bank provided for highway purposes" and that they would violate the Constitutional

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provision that "no single relocated portion of any highway shall exceed one mile in length" within the Forest Preserve. It was also said that they would require some invasion of wetlands.

Mr. Gardeski further stated that the Department is preparing "a Project Development Report which will address the entire Route 74 Corridor deficiencies The report will discuss all alternate solutions and compare their relative merits in satisfying goals and objectives. The report will also recommend some alternates as viable and feasible for future consideration and some alternates will be classified as not meeting a reasonable number of the goals and objectives. The two alternates proposed by the Route 74 Association will likely be dropped from further consideration."

The Gardeski findings were reproduced and distributed to all Association directors who subsequently met to discuss them and to determine our future course of action. While Mr. Gardeski's letter may have been intended to discourage our efforts, the outcome of the directors' meeting was a renewed resolve to seek a viable alternate route in addition to obtaining much needed repair and preservation of the present route.

With this determination we went back to the DOT whereupon the DOT decided to "take a new look" at the whole Route 74 situation. In order to ensure that it would be approached with a "fresh mind" and without bias or commitment to preconceived plans, the DOT turned the task over to an independent engineering consulting firm - Clough Associates.

At the same time we were assured that our views would receive full consideration and Charles E. Carlson, DOT regional director offered to meet with us as often as we might wish.

The Contract

The contract with the engineering consultants detailed the work to be performed, at a fee not exceeding \$375,000 and extending over a period of 22 months, at the end of which construction will begin. Because monies for the contract are to be paid out of next year's budget, it will be signed this November.

Details of the contract were delineated for members at the annual meeting by Vice President Robert Robinson who explained that it had been studied by members of the executive committee of the Association's board who met on August 16 with DOT Regional Director Charles Carlson and aides Foster Beach and George McLoughlin. Representing the Association were Whitman Daniels, Graham Davis, Louise Haberly, Charles Whitney and Robert Robinson, and Robert Stevens.

Your representatives went over the proposed contract item by item with Mr. Carlson and his associates. Particular attention was given to the projected schedule, to ensuring that we would be kept informed every step of the way and that our views and suggestions would be considered as the work progressed.

A particularly significant result of our discussion concerning the contract was DOT's agreement to amend it so as to direct the consultants to investigate the construction of a viable alternate route to serve truck and through traffic. In view of the DOT's rejection, via Mr. Gardeski's report, of the two alternate routes we had proposed, we had determined to ask the highway engineers to seek a route that would be feasible and would avoid the elements of our proposed routes with which the Department found fault. Accordingly, the consultants will be asked to direct their efforts to that end.

The seeking of an alternate route for truck and through traffic will be in addition to planning the improvement maintenance needed on the existing route.

The consultant will make extensive environmental studies including air, noise and water pollution, conservation and aesthetic values and possible impacts on people, businesses, farms and regional and community growth.

Noise, Air, Water

In response to our protestations relative to the noise of trucks along the route and the air and water pollution caused by exhaust emissions of trucks, the consultants' studies will thoroughly analyze the current situation and make predictions of future impacts.

Some of our members who wrote us following our second newsletter complained particularly about the noise at their house and suggested that decibel level measurements be made from their front porch or bedroom. This will be done. Noise abatement measures will also be considered.

Reports to be issued by the consultants will deal with air quality, and water quality. Potable water sources will be studied. Storm drainage, salting, sedimentation, erosion, hydrology and other related water quality aspects will be probed.

If any properties affected by the proposed alternates have archeological or historic significance these will also be reported.

If the Association is to derive maximum benefit from the work of the consultants it will have to study the reports of the consultants as their work progresses - and this will call for time and effort.

Roadwork Now

In addition to the consultants' studies relative to the future of the Route 74 area there is the work to be done immediately on the road, and Graham Davis reported on this to the members at the annual meeting.

Our earlier newsletter inviting your comments and advice concerning work that should be undertaken now brought in about a half dozen

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responses. In addition, Graham Davis, Charles Whitney and Whit Daniels made a detailed survey of the road identifying many specifics that need early attention. These were presented to the DOT on August 29 by the Messrs Daniels, Davis, Warren, Whitney and Robinson and Mrs. Haberly when they met with Ed Riley, the Department's regional engineer.

In agreement with the urgent need for maintenance of Route 74, Mr. Riley stated that although his maintenance crew has been greatly reduced, it ^{will} start the work on Route 74 as soon as the shoulders on Route 9 north of Schroon Lake village are completed. The week of September 9 was set as a target date for beginning the work on Route 74. Six hundred tons of blacktop will be allocated for immediate application to the road. Some lines will be repainted forthwith even though they will have to be repainted after the road is blacktopped. Grading will be undertaken and ditches and culverts will be cleaned. Signs - for safety, speed limits and pedestrian crossings - will be referred to that section of the Department.

Future

The months ahead, Mr. Daniels said, will require much of the Association's executive group. There will be meetings with DOT people. The consultants will be issuing reports for our study and evaluation. This will require various kinds of expertise and Mr. Daniels called for volunteers from our membership who have special knowledge of highway design and construction, noise impacts, water and air quality determinations and other things that the consultants will be delving into. Also, he said, the repair and maintenance work to be undertaken this fall requires monitoring. People living along Route 74 or travelling frequently should be willing to help in this and their volunteered assistance is invited.

Objective Reaffirmed

The annual meeting was then opened for questions and comments. Discussion ensued, leading to a motion made by Philip J. Pinkus of Paradox Lake and seconded by Ruth Cummings of Eagle Lake, that THE ROUTE 74 ASSOCIATION GO ON RECORD AS FAVORING A NEW ROAD IN A NEW LOCATION RATHER THAN MAJOR RECONSTRUCTION OF THE PRESENT ROUTE 74. Voting was by a show of hands. The motion was passed with only one person dissenting.

The overwhelming vote in favor of this motion elicited from one member present the opinion that the motion "is essentially what we weighed in with when we started this group." He added that we have reason to believe that what we propose won't be accepted, that we're only a very small part of the total picture, that the federal government is not going to pour out millions and be influenced by anything we say, and that our function is largely to find out what they have in mind. Finally, he asked "Have we learned anything in a year?"

In rebuttal to this comment another member declared, "I've been through one of these highway controversies when I was living

in Massachusetts and it is tremendously important for citizens to get together and say what they want and to keep after those guys and make them do it. What is really necessary, in my experience, is to be unified. Once you start fighting among yourselves - they win; they go right through you. So, while I wasn't here last year, I believe that even if this motion just reaffirms some of the feelings of the meeting a year ago that is important - and it is an important message for the directors to take to the State planning agencies." - - (Applause)

Also in rebuttal, Bob Robinson rose to respond - "I don't think we are where we were a year ago. The very fact that the Department of Transportation has hired an engineering firm with the directive to take a fresh look at the whole situation and not be bound by the maps and studies heretofore made by the State, in itself is an achievement. If they take a fresh look and if they deal with us honestly - and I quote Mr. Carlson saying that 'We will deal with you honestly and keep you informed' - I think that, in itself, is an accomplishment. At least we're getting them to investigate, rather than to consider, alternate routes. So there is hope they will relocate on a new alignment despite the environmental concerns. And there are real environmental concerns. There is a general policy, from the conservation point of view, in road building to build along existing beds rather than along new alignments."

Other comments and questions followed.

Jane Lape asked, "Have there been any approaches to the Environmental Protection Agency?" Also she stated, "it would be well to recommend that, as a taxpayer and property owners' group you approach both your state and federal legislators for support in your endeavors."

Mr. Daniels welcomed this "very sensible suggestion" and stated that the Association will want to call on its members to communicate in this manner with state officials and with both legislators and Congressmen. The environmental groups, he said, will automatically be brought in during the course of the consultants' work but he confirmed Mrs. Lape's view that the Association should communicate directly with the environmental groups. "It will be necessary for us," he said, "to make sure they understand precisely what we are talking about when we say we do not want to see further damage to these beautiful water bodies (Paradox and Eagle Lakes). The natural inclination of the environmentalists will be against cutting new roads anywhere. Members of the Sierra Club or other environmental protection groups who reside far away may judge our situation superficially and say 'Well, if they're talking about a new road that's going to go through some woods, let's stop that!' We will have to tell them the importance of not creating further damage to this area traversed by Route 74."

Mr. Messa of Paradox stressed the need, for safety's sake, to get the present route repaired now. Mr. Daniels replied that

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This is being done. He stated that our first priority, based on tonight's decisive vote, is another route in another location for trucks and through traffic BUT we are not abandoning the maintenance and minimal improvement of Route 74.

Other questions related to the DOT's traffic count, whether trucks of different loads and size were tabulated, and whether the per day traffic count was for 24 hours or less.

Elections

Ted Dobbs, chairman of the nominating committee (and treasurer) presented the nominations of four candidates as directors of the Association to succeed four whose terms have expired. The proposed new directors: Jane Lape of Putnam Station and Ticonderoga; George Conklin and David Warren of Eagle Lake; Herman Simon of Schroon Lake who is president of the Schroon Lake Association. Retiring members of the board are Arthur Grae, George Morrell, William Spreen and Emma Strebe.

The nominating committee also proposed reelection of the current officers:

President	-	Whitman Daniels
First Vice President	-	Charles Whitney
Second Vice President	-	Robert Robinson
Treasurer	-	Ted Dobbs
Secretary	-	Lois McEwen

There being no further nominations Mr. Julius Hyman of Paradox Lake moved that the report of the nominating committee be accepted and that the secretary be instructed to cast one ballot for all. The motion was seconded and carried. The meeting was thereupon adjourned.

Ten new members were enlisted at the meeting which, added to the total reported by the membership chairman, increases the roster to 235.

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