

Sharing Chappy Roads

Chappaquiddick Island, Massachusetts

March 15, 2010

To the Edgartown Board of Selectmen:

We were pleased to read the letter that Dick Knight and the Chappy Path Committee (CPC) wrote to your Board and published in the *Vineyard Gazette* dated March 12th. The conciliatory tone is a welcome relief to a year and a half of rejection of our assertion that alternatives to a mixed-use path need to be explored before tearing up the roadside and permanently changing the Chappaquiddick landscape.

The letter outlines four steps based on certain premises.

Step 1: Develop a factual basis for discussion. We could not agree more that feasible options, their implications and costs are imperative to consider. However, the superficial nature of the Northeastern University undergraduate senior project, and the absence of any closely examined alternatives, does not give us confidence in the results. We seriously question using it as a basis for any future action.

Step 2: Accurately measure public opinion. A survey commissioned by the CPC bike path developers and written by undergraduate civil engineering students is inherently biased. The obvious challenge of an impartial survey is in deciding who develops the survey, who receives it, and who evaluates the results. Chappybikepath.com exists for the purpose of sharing public opinion. It is invaluable because all letters to public officials and newspapers, and comments submitted to the site are posted there. These reflect true opinions not led by any questions.

Step 3: Promote community understanding. The Chappaquiddick community is very much involved and engaged through research and debate. There have been 3 public forums including the Sharing Chappy Roads professionally moderated meeting on Aug 11, 2009. The concept of a mixed-use path on Chappy is not new or complicated; it is very simple for anyone to understand without additional surveys and studies. Is a path needed or wanted? What can be done to make bikes and cars more compatible? Those are the questions to be addressed. Can this community tolerate another summer of bike path discussions when some people are already not speaking to each other in a civil manner?

Step 4: Engage the appropriate town committees. The appropriate town boards have been engaged and made it clear that they do not want to be involved until Chappy community members come to some agreements. If the CPC continue their bike path campaign, then that process can only happen if the two sides meet under the leadership of an objective mediator in order to end the debate, as recommended by Julia Wells in her recent *Vineyard Gazette* editorial.

Final Note: We applaud the CPC's stated desire to have a civil and rational discussion. We again invite them to sit down with us to identify the specific safety and congestion issues. Then let's work together to plan steps that our community can take now, to address those issues prior to jumping headlong into a bike path which will permanently and adversely affect the aesthetics and environment of Chappaquiddick.

Respectfully,
Sharing Chappy Roads Committee

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