

Letter distributed to the CIA by email Dec 5, 2008

December 3, 2008

Dear CIA Members,

As Chairman of the Chappy Bike path Committee, I write to explain the origins and position of the Committee and the efforts we have made since we formed this summer. I also write to thank Terry Forde for his Herculean efforts to help us all communicate and for his fairness in distributing both sides of the issues.

By way of introduction for those who do not know me, my wife Gay and I have owned a house on Chappy for 20 years and I am a physician at MGH. I am an avid bicyclist, riding to work 4 miles most every day in Cambridge and Boston -- it's faster, cheaper and healthier than a car.

For at least 30 years there have been efforts to establish a bike/walking path along our roads on Chappy without success. Whether there was ever a vote on the matter, I do not know. In the meantime, the traffic and the opportunity for accidents have increased considerably. Many, particularly children, do not bike or walk due to the hazards and unpleasantness of walking or riding on the road. We suffer from a tyranny of motor vehicles.

In the summer of 2008 several of the veterans of the past campaigns got together to assess the situation. Among those involved were Dick Knight, Melissa Kagan, Tom Tilghman, Will Gerese, Joe Sullivan and Peter Wells, who now form the steering committee of the Chappy Path Committee. I joined them as a fresh recruit, motivated by the arrival of grandchildren who I hope will be able to bicycle safely on Chappy in the near future. Since I was new to this issue, they made me Chairman. From our personal observations and from our friends and neighbors on Chappy, we felt that there was an increased need and interest in re-opening this question. We did not however, want to work on this project unless we represented the majority viewpoint. We discussed the issue of a Bike path with the Selectman at the open meeting they held with Seasonal Residents in August and were pleased with their positive reception to the concept. At the August CIA meeting, Terry Forde said that a majority attending expressed their support of a path through a show of hands.

To cast the net wider, the Committee elected to assess the level of support for the concept of a bike path by an email survey, the most efficient way to reach a large, dispersed group. Terry Forde was quite helpful and sent the survey questionnaire to the CIA membership. To be as inclusive as possible, we also sent the same survey to all others on Chappy with email addresses known to us, whether or not they were members of the CIA. We believe that everyone on Chappy should be part of the process.

The results of this survey were remarkable for two reasons: 1) many responded—we had 233 replies in 3 weeks; and 2) the vast majority of the respondents (70%) were in favor of the principle of a shared use path. We acknowledge that our survey had limitations. We did not get replies from everyone—probably about 40-50% response rate of emails sent out. We did not contact everyone, since there is no consolidated e-mail address list of every family on Chappy and not everyone has an email address. Still, the survey served its principal purpose, to justify further efforts on our part to promote a new analysis of the opportunities for a path. We communicated our results at the end of August by email to our mailing list of 212 people who requested updates, whether they were for or against a path, and copied it to the CIA for distribution. We also compiled the arguments against a path and gave our rebuttals as best we could. These and other communications from our committee are available on request ([ChappyPath@aol.com](mailto:ChappyPath@aol.com)).

We then expanded the Chappy Path Committee to its current size of 39 (we hope you will join). The members are a diverse group – CIA and non-CIA members, winter as well as summer residents, representing most geographic parts of Chappy. It is an open, voluntary and independent organization of Chappy homeowners, What we share in common is the belief that the time has

come for a shared use path on Chappy, primarily for safety reasons, and that a design is possible that would enhance Chappy's beauty. As a starting point, we believe that a non-asphalt path, no more than 8 feet wide separated from the road by a few feet would fit best into the Chappy environment. While we are flexible in design alternatives, we strongly believe that safety and aesthetics should be the guiding principles. Furthermore, we believe that open, informed discussion is the best way to find common ground among different points of view.

In early October the Chappy Path Committee met and reviewed the engineering survey that had been prepared several years ago. We could see how a path might be achieved from the Chappy Ferry to the Dyke bridge. However, we realized that because the survey was outdated and not sufficiently accurate, we needed a new more complete engineering survey to decide whether a path really could be constructed and how it might be designed. We thought that this was necessary to enable a realistic discussion of the merits of a path among Chappy homeowners.

In mid October we learned that an engineering survey for shared use path could be eligible for funding through the Community Preservation Act. With a 3 day notice we got together a grant application and submitted it to the Edgartown Community Preservation Committee (CPC). In addition to the engineering survey we asked for funds to construct a demonstration path on the Gardner property using an aesthetically appealing sand-like surface that has proved durable in other shared use paths. The advantage of the demonstration path is that it would relieve congestion in the busiest part of the road and would test the non-asphalt surface under Chappy conditions. It would also show the benefit of a path to the skeptics. We communicated our update and the grant proposal in October by email to our mailing list and sent copies to the CIA for distribution.

Ideally, we would have had preliminary meetings among the Chappy residents to get input on this proposal. However the short deadline made this impossible. Some advised us to wait until next year so that it could be discussed at a CIA meeting in the summer. However, we felt that such discussions about the bike path (now called shared use path) would be much more productive with the benefit of new and accurate information from our proposed engineering survey. Because we strive to represent the majority view, just before Thanksgiving we sent out another questionnaire via the CIA and our own email lists to Chappy residents to assess the level of support for the two components of our proposal. The early results show that a majority favor one or both components of our proposal. The final results will be available next week and will be distributed.

The Community Preservation Committee held a public meeting on November 6<sup>th</sup> and the path proposal was presented and discussed. On the meeting of November 20, they voted unanimously to support the engineering survey, but not the Gardner demonstration path. The final hearing is scheduled for Dec 11<sup>th</sup> at 4 pm at the Edgartown School (announced in the Vineyard Gazette) to review all the applications for CPA funds. Before any funds are actually awarded, they will be presented for a vote at the Annual Town Meeting in April of 2009.

So, this is why you have been getting so many emails, useful but admittedly no substitute for face to face discussion. Next summer we are eager to sponsor open special meetings for CIA and non-CIA Chappy residents to provide input and comments and for us to be able to present potential solutions that would address some of the concerns. We strongly hope that a definitive engineering study will be done as soon as possible as we have proposed, so that these future discussions can be based on fact, a necessary ingredient to reach an amiable consensus.

We hope that ultimately we can earn your support for this project and in any case welcome the opportunity to discuss your views.

Happy trails,

Bob Colvin  
Chair, Chappy Path Committee

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