



# HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION SPECIAL MEETING

2 Fairgrounds Road  
Nantucket, Massachusetts 02554

[www.nantucket-ma.gov](http://www.nantucket-ma.gov)

**Commissioners:** Raymond Pohl (Chair), Diane Coombs (Vice-chair), John McLaughlin, Abigail Camp, Vallorie Oliver,  
**Associate Commissioners:** Stephen Welch, Terence Watterson, Jessie Dutra

~~ MINUTES ~~

**Thursday, January 10, 2019**

Public Safety Facility, 4 Fairgrounds Road, Training Room – 6:00 p.m.

Called to order at 6:00 p.m. and announcements by Ms. Coombs

Staff in attendance: John Hedden, HDC Compliance Coordinator; Kadeem McCarthy, Administrative Specialist  
Attending Members: Coombs, McLaughlin, Camp, Welch  
Absent Members: Pohl, Oliver, Dutra  
Early Departure: McLaughlin, 7:54 p.m.  
DPW Reps.: Director Rob McNeil; James Rivard, Stantec

Agenda adopted by unanimous consent.

## I. PUBLIC COMMENT

None

## II. PUBLIC INFORMATION SESSION WITH THE DPW AND POSSIBLE DISCUSSION IN REGARD TO PROPOSED ROAD AND SIDEWALK WORK ON UPPER MAIN STREET.

Present Coombs, McLaughlin, Camp, Welch

Comments **McNeil** – Presented process for repairing the cobblestone road and sidewalk of upper Main Street. Working with Marty McGowan on this project.

**Coombs** – Asked about the heavy traffic use of the road.

**McNeil** – Explained how the road foundation would support heavy truck traffic from the DPW: lift the stones, improve the foundation, reset the stones; it will be watched, and people can report about it. Recognizes how important this is to the Island. Explained the expansion of the turn at Pleasant and Main and construction of flush crosswalks. He and Cormac Collier, Nantucket Land Council, sponsored a program with WPI students this past summer that resulted in excellent documentation of the history of some streets. He’s been in discussion with the tree warden and has an arborist on staff in order to protect the trees during work. The crosswalks will be consolidated into two and improved for safer use; that will increase the number of on-street parking spaces.

**Coombs** – It is important to do as planned; little repairs won’t work. HDC has discussed having the limits to the weight of trucks going up Main Street.

**McNeil** – As he understands from the Chief of Police that weight limits are not legal; they are standard for bridges but not streets. He will look into that further.

**Coombs** – Cobblestone streets and elm trees are the Island calling cards; if those are lost the economy is impacted. Cited the saving of the large elm tree next to 8 Atlantic Avenue as an example of how it can work without cutting any roots. No other place in the country has the number of elm trees Nantucket has.

**McNeil** – We have limited time in which to do this work. He wants it done right so it will stand up to years of use. It has to be done in a way that repairs can be made without excessive expense.

**Coombs** – Another concern is the road does not have an impervious surface underneath.

**McNeil** – If we were to introduce any level of impervious surface under the stones, a gutter line would be required to allow penetration of rainwater.

**Coombs** – An impervious surface would starve the trees.

**McNeil** – This is a 100% custom job that can’t be replicated on a piece of paper; there are no design plans. We have contemplated moving the curb out and providing a green space giving the trees more area for nourishment.

**Coombs** – Asked if it is necessary for sidewalks to be flat. The sidewalk could be sloped over the roots.

**McNeil** – It’s likely that most of the project area will lift the sidewalk to level it out around the trees; they don’t want to cut into the trees to bring the sidewalk down.

**Coombs** – You can introduce new materials if you follow materials already being used along Main Street; could put wrought iron fences around the trees.

**McNeil** – He wants to be flexible for where tree roots have separated the stone.

**Rivard** – Sidewalks must be flat because of the restrictive rules of the Americans with Disabilities Act. If the sidewalk isn't flat, the Town could be subject to \$1000-a-day fine until the sidewalk is brought into compliance.

**Coombs** – She knows it can't tilt but doesn't see why it can't have small rises.

**McNeil** – We have to respect the fixed features such as driveways, fence openings, and stairways. If we were to dramatically change the sidewalk, we have to approach each homeowner. There will be future site walks.

**McLaughlin** – A lot of old rounded curbs were removed and replaced with sharp-edged curbs; asked what happened to the old ones.

**McNeil** – A lot of the material is stockpiled.

**McLaughlin** – Whatever is taken out, should be reused; the square curbs aren't Nantucket style. There are only two catch basins between the bank and the monument; rain water pools at the drain nearest the Coffin School. He did a survey of the catch basins on the Island and gave it to the DPW; they lost it. The bulkhead on Easy Street without any presentation to the public.

**Camp** – Asked if there is way to make the sharp curb in front of the Club Car a softer edge.

**Rivard** – It would have to be cut with a saw and would look odd; it will soften over time. They no longer manufacture the rounded curb.

**McNeil** – The area around the Club Car is a taxi stand; they are well aware of the sharp curb. High traffic areas the curbs have been softened; we are trying to minimize damage to vehicles.

**Virginia Andrews**, 1 Stone Alley – She is an officer of the Pacific Club and wants to see the return of the old granite curb that was there. She doesn't know if the Pacific Club was notified about the work. The bluestone was a sign of wealth and signified the home of an important person. When Pleasant Street was last resurfaced, it was grated too deep; that's why the trees stick out. The last time Main Street was repaired was 1977. Granted the sidewalk was too narrow, however, with the widened sidewalk and the taxis and the delivery trucks across the street, the road is narrow and wonders if firetrucks can get through there.

**McNeil** – It will get narrower; the large sidewalk, however, will accommodate groups of people who congregate on the corner at the Pacific Club.

**Hilary Rayport**, 89 Main Street – Asked if the textile bricks will be used on this section of the Main Street sidewalk.

**McNeil** – The intent is to use the ADA-accessible brick that was used downtown to improve the accessibility of the sidewalk at crosswalks. DPW works in concert with the local Commission on Disability to make improvements where possible. Without a waiver from the State board, it takes a phone call to have it revert back.

**Rayport** – She appreciates hearing about the waiver process. She thinks it's important to fix the sidewalk for people who have limited mobility; however, unless we remove all the elm trees, the sidewalks won't be fully ADA compliant.

**Rivard** – There are several waiver requests moving forward: sidewalks less than three feet wide, slope at side-street intersections, reusing the flag stone. We've taken measurements and identified the areas that need variances.

**McNeil** – There was a waiver compromise for ADA access into the Club Car due to coordination through the owner and the State-level permitting board.

**Coombs** – If boards and departments work together, the outcome will be better looking. Appreciates this opportunity.

**McNeil** – We have the opportunity to use experts who have been working on the Island cobble streets for a number of years: cited areas where they have relayed the cobblestones.

**Rayport** – The crew that put the cobbles down in 2009 and 2013 did a terrible job; she believes that is part of the reason it is in such a bad state now.

**McNeil** – The crew that will be doing the work did not do the work those two previous times. It does come up; so he is cognizant of the repair work that is happening.

**Michael May**, Nantucket Preservation Trust – The existing crosswalks are character defining of the street; asked if it is possible to maintain them and that character even though it might not meet code.

**Rivard** – Many of those are mid-block crosswalks and are very dangerous; drivers don't expect to see a pedestrian in the middle of the road. Cars are slowing down as they approach an intersection.

**McNeil** – That is a point to bring to the State; this is probably not the first such situation. He will look into if the state will allow them to remain in place even if they aren't formal crossing areas.

**Angus MacLeod** – His concern is the replacement of crosswalks with a different texture than is historical.

**Rayport** – She sees the need for the new crosswalks, but these flagstone crosswalks are beautiful and speak to the Island history.

**Rivard** – There are downspouts that intersect the sidewalk and will require a waiver.

**Milton Rowland**, Chair Commission on Disabilities – All the waivers the DPW will request will go through his board and usually adheres with the commission's recommendations.

**Welch** – In addition to the cobblestone, he believes the existing crosswalks are a quieting element for traffic. Asked if there will be two or more types of cobble used and if the build will be traditional, so it will have the same reaction to traffic, weight, runoff, and weather.

**Rivard** – He has seen where asphalt and concrete were used as a base in Portland Maine and Boston near the USS Constitution.

**Welch** – His concern from the capital and infrastructure side is for what goes in; there's capacity and deliverability issues. If there is concrete and work needs to be done, the amount of work and cost is magnified due to the removal of that material.

**McNeil** – He doesn't want to test a spot where he would kill a mature tree when he can work appropriately around them. He has heard comments about the texture and look of the cobbles. He feels that historic look can be reclaimed without looking pristine. At the Charlestown Navy Yard, the road is Belgium block on stone dust on concrete.

**Andrews** – Sooner or later there will be sand under the concrete; around the Pacific Club, there is high-water issues and the concrete becomes a boat.

**Rivard** – Stated that wherever his work comes in contact with a tree root, he calls Dale Champoux the tree warden, who tells his crew what sort of work will best protect the tree.

**Coombs** – Thanked Mr. McNeil and Mr. Rivard for this opportunity; it has changed her mind.

**McNeil** – If anyone has further comments or questions to please contact him. He hopes the 86-88 Main Street Demonstration Project will be complete before summer and looks forward to feedback.

**Rayport** – Asked who designed the Main Street/Easy Street intersection.

**McNeil** – That was a plan designed between the Sidewalk committee and a design firm five years ago. There are a lot of plans drafted for a majority of the roads.

**Rayport** – Regarding upper Main Street, she feels there is a huge whole between what they are being told will happen and what we might ultimately end up with. As a resident with a huge investment in Main Street, when she hears the reason the old curbstones were removed outside the Pacific Club, my question becomes why the sidewalk wasn't made lower. She hopes Mr. McNeil understand how much this matters.

**McNeil** – There are more reasons why something was done. Upper Main Street was identified as more important than lower Main Street; harvesting traditional materials that we can't manufacture or purchase from a portion of a lower Main Street is the goal.

**Rayport** – She doesn't agree that upper Main Street is more important than lower Main Street; the Pacific Club is enormously important.

**May** – Asked if the HDC has been or will be consulted on any work taking place in the old historic district and who has the final say.

**McNeil** – Like any good process, the department head makes decisions and a board that makes recommendations to minimize or eliminate concerns and questions.

**Coombs** – Over the years, the HDC has guided certain aspects of roads, driveways, and sidewalks. On occasion, the Select Board has ruled an appeal in conflict with HDC purview. There is a debate on how much control the HDC has on downtown infrastructure: street lights, wrought-iron fences, driveway aprons, etc.

**McNeil** – The two styles of decorative street lamps is an example of why Public Works and HD should work together. He would love to have a uniform style of bike racks around Town; however, there are people who think each neighborhood should have different styles.

**Coombs** – The intersection at the Pacific Club is a horror show in the summer and pedestrians are everywhere while the police regulate where traffic is going. If the police regulated the pedestrians rather than allowing them to hold up cars, there would be no problem.

**McNeil** – What he thinks would be helpful would be to share the sidewalk plans for downtown with the HDC before the March information session. Cited people integral in bringing projects to design after spending hours identifying problem areas as well as street furniture.

**Alan Reinhart**, Roads and Right-of-Way Committee – They spent three years doing a downtown sidewalk survey and rated the condition of the core area sidewalks street-by-street, number-by-number. That data was compiled and made available; that was the impetus to get the Town to focus on improving the sidewalks. Mr. McNeil is focusing on those areas where the sidewalks were untenable; this has been a long time coming.

### III. ADJOURN

List of additional documents used at the meeting:

1. Historic photos.

Adjourned at 8:07 p.m. by unanimous consent

Submitted by:

Terry L. Norton