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—For section..... News
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—Dateline..... Hinsdale, N.H.
—Article Number:..... 43540



Notes from editor (not for publication):



HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

####BEGIN HED####

1 Two boards, formerly at odds, eye resolution for bridges
2 to N.H.

####END HED####

####BEGIN SUBHED####

3 Hinsdale, Brattleboro Selectboards meet to discuss
4 original plan to open Anna Hunt Marsh and Charles Dana
5 bridges for pedestrian and bike use

####END SUBHED####

6 TEXT BODY:

####BEGIN TEXT####

7 An April 20 joint session of Brattleboro Selectboard
8 members and their counterparts from Hinsdale, New Hampshire,
9 resulted in consensus to form a working group, including board
10 members and police chiefs, to explore solutions and review
11 existing proposals.

12 But jurisdiction and resource allocation for policing the
13 Anna Hunt Marsh and Charles Dana bridge area remain a critical
14 unresolved issue.

15 "I believe the goal here is for us to have some nice
16 discussion about the bridges," said Hinsdale Selectman Chair
17 Steve Diorio of the spans linking the two towns across the
18 Connecticut River.

19 "Hopefully, we can maybe even garner some more ideas
20 and thoughts," he said, adding, "I don't think we've really had
21 that opportunity to work together in a real positive manner to get
22 some things done, so the discussion tonight I expect will be very
23 casual, polite."

24 The Brattleboro board sought to reopen talks with
25 Hinsdale officials to ask that the current barriers on the bridge be
26 removed and the two closed spans connecting the town be
27 reopened for a planned June 24 celebration of Brattleboro's new
28 Amtrak train station.

29 **History: a meeting of the** 30 **minds**

31 The original agreement between Brattleboro and
32 Hinsdale regarding the bridges was forged a decade ago. It
33 included a stipulation for pedestrian and bicycle use of the
34 century-old spans as economically and recreationally beneficial
35 to both towns.

36 Hinsdale owns 93% of the spans and Brattleboro owns
37 the remaining 7%. The island they are on — where some say tent
38 encampments have caused numerous nuisance and legal issues
39 — is owned by Great River Hydro, based in Massachusetts.

40 After the new \$62 million General John Stark Memorial
41 Bridge was opened in 2024 just downriver, Hinsdale selectmen
42 voted unanimously to ask the state not to go ahead with a \$9.3
43 million plan to rehabilitate the spans for foot traffic, fearing

44 subsequent maintenance costs as well as myriad safety issues to
45 contend with.

46 Most Brattleboro Selectboard members did not support
47 razing the spans, preferring instead to reopen the spans to
48 pedestrian traffic as part of a planned greenway trail system
49 connecting New Hampshire with Vermont.

50 It subsequently came to light that neither potentially
51 rehabilitating the spans nor razing them would occur until 2029
52 — several years after it had hereto been thought.

53 Last year, Hinsdale’s board voted to accept an agreement
54 with the New Hampshire Department of Transportation to allow
55 the bridges to be rehabilitated for pedestrians.

56 Also in 2025, both bridges, built in 1920 and 1926 by
57 John Storrs, were named as part of the New Hampshire
58 Preservation Alliance’s 2025 “Seven to Save.” The two are among
59 four surviving Parker high-truss bridges in the state and
60 considered iconic examples of 20th-century steel engineering.

61 The state and federal government have earmarked money
62 to help stabilize and adapt the bridges. Preservation advocates
63 say the Seven to Save designation can help strengthen future
64 grant applications and partnerships.

65 **In search of compromise**

66 Brattleboro Selectboard members were clear they were
67 asking, for now, for the barrier to be moved so as to make the
68 bridge look less unsightly and not detract from a new restaurant
69 planned at the site.

70 They asked it be moved farther onto the bridge — about
71 halfway or to the opposite end toward Vermont — but not to
72 remove it entirely.

73 Member Peter Case said he sometimes jokes that the
74 current barrier is reminiscent of a “Cold War” blockade.

75 Diorio supported the idea, agreeing the current setup is
76 unappealing, but officials, including Hinsdale Police Chief
77 Melissa Evans, expressed significant concerns regarding policing,

78 security, and resource strain, as the bridges and island are in New
79 Hampshire and would require a response from her department.

80 "Anything that happens on the bridges, we would still
81 have to respond to it, which means we're going to come over
82 them, come around the other, possibly get struck by the train, and
83 not come back over if we have something in our town," she said.
84 "I just don't think it's feasible right now. [...] I personally don't
85 want to come across."

86 Using private security to patrol the bridge was also
87 discussed, but Evans noted such personnel would not have any
88 law enforcement power.

89 Brattleboro Selectboard member Amanda Ellis Thurber
90 offered that if a way could be found to alleviate the concerns, a
91 temporary compromise to allow the opening for the celebration
92 would be a boon.

93 Also discussed was a potential two-town cleanup to
94 show cooperation.

95 Ellis-Thurber and Case offered to be part of an
96 information collaborative group with two members from each
97 board discussing ideas.

98 That group may also engage with the Friends of Island
99 Park Facebook group to correct potential misinformation posted
100 there, as one attendee noted.

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BIO/COATTAIL:

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