


Hearing to address Route 123 bridge

New span to replace roadway destroyed in October 2005 flood

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Contributing Writer

The citizens group Walpole Tomorrow and Walpole timber frame builder Bensonwood will propose new Cold River bridge designs at a 7 p.m. Walpole Town

 **Walpole** Hall hearing tonight sponsored by the New Hampshire Department of Transportation.

The new span will replace the Route 123 Cold River bridge wiped out by the October 2005 flood.

"The purpose of tonight's meeting is to ask for input in order to ensure that project decisions meet public needs, community goals and protect and enhance the environment," said New Hampshire Department of Transportation engineer Robert Landry. Landry will conduct the hearing.

More than 30 area residents, mostly from Upper Valley Road, attended a June 28 NHDOT hearing on possible designs for the new bridge. The issue then was whether to build a new single-span bridge or a two-span, granite-faced bridge that looked much like the old bridge. According to many that night, the design mattered less than getting the new span built as quickly as possible.

Later, the board of selectmen chose the single-span, concrete butted box design on the theory that it presented fewer natural resource issues and could be built in a few months' shorter time than the two-span bridge.

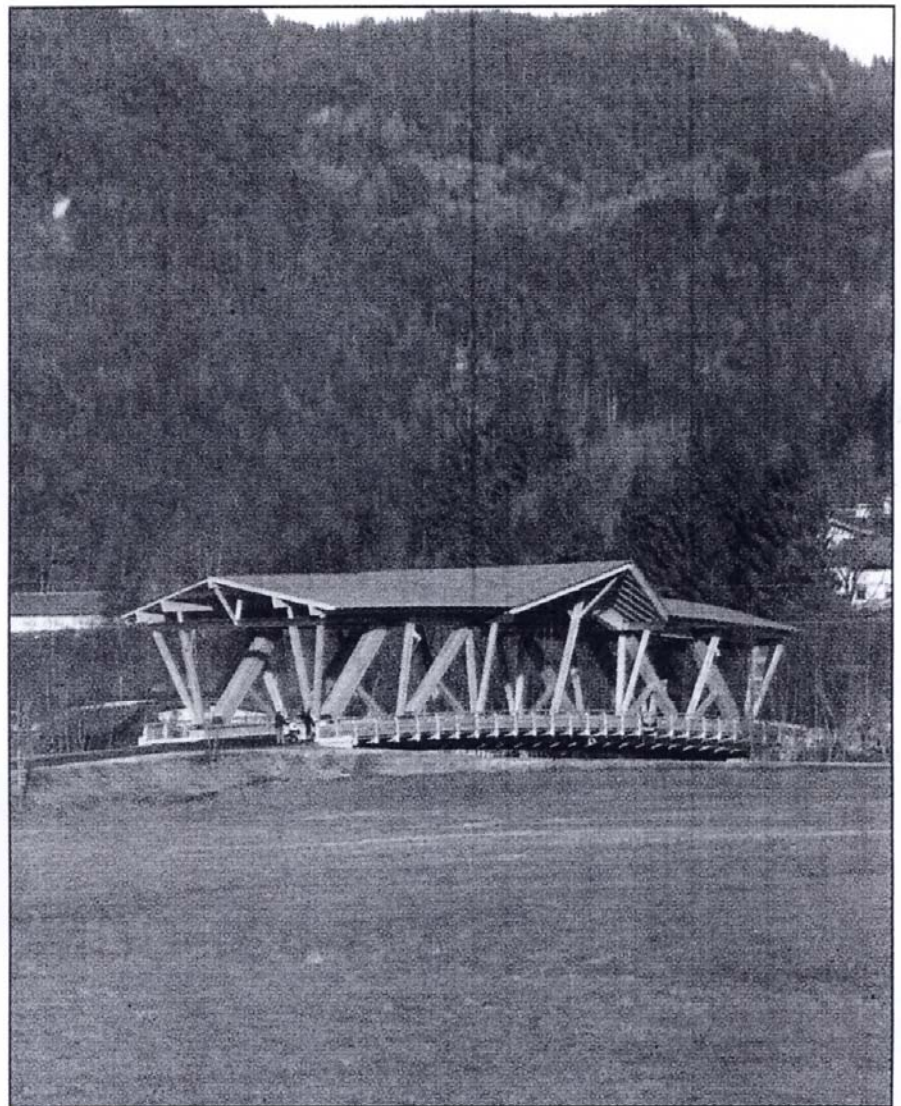
In October, John Hansel, representing Walpole Tomorrow, petitioned for an additional public hearing on bridge designs and intends at tonight's hearing to argue for the double-span design in keeping with the earlier look.

In addition to Hansel's proposal, Bensonwood has been collecting alterna-

and concrete components as well.

According to Bensonwood engineer Annette Dey, many of these bridges have replaced washed-out bridges in recent years and have proven to be practical and cost effective. Bensonwood representatives have said it is open to the possibility of contributing the design and construction engineering as a part of an overall bridge construction effort.

"We thought it right to give people a hearing," Selectman Sheldon Sawyer said. But at the same time they need to be aware of the time restraints, how the process has taken place so far, and that residents along the Cold River and Upper



COURTESY PHOTO

Above is an example of one of the proposed structures to replace the Cold River Bridge, which was washed out during the October 2005 flood. A meeting at Walpole Town Hall tonight will address proposals for the new bridge's design.

tive design ideas for contemporary covered bridges that take advantage of state-of-the-art timber engineering,

advanced wood technology and the opportunity to make efficient use of steel

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Valley Road have endured much increased traffic with the bridge out."

Following tonight's hearing, Landry says he will ask selectmen to again decide what design the town prefers, and try to meld that decision into what would be best for the general public.

Landry is still hoping to advertise for bids in early spring 2007 and to have construction complete by late fall of next year. He noted Monday, however, that time line may be delayed by the need to purchase more rights of way before construction can begin.

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