

Should The Town Of Edgecomb Purchase A Parcel Of Land On The Sheepscot River To Create A Picnic Area?

Pros:

Local residents around Cross Point Road will not have to drive as far to launch their canoes (they would still have to go to Wiscasset 10 minutes away to launch a boat).

Residents gain a small picnic area by the river, but parents need to watch their children carefully.

Cons:

Though this site is on the river, it is not possible for residents to launch any boats larger than they can carry (ie a canoe, kayak or dinghy), due to the steep drive which opens directly on to a blind spot on Cross Point Road.

The property is located between two particularly dangerous blind curves. Any cars parked by the side of the road, or children crossing the street by the property, would be out of sight of cars coming from one or both directions (see line of sight photographs).

In addition to the poor line of sight, the speed that cars and trucks drive down this hill makes this corner even more dangerous. In 2005 it was the site of a serious accident, when a teenager was thrown from his car and ended up underneath it, a few feet from this proposed site. This happened in the winter but excessive speed was the primary cause. Since then, residents walking dogs and pushing strollers have seen several near misses and plenty of dangerous driving in this exact same spot.

The proposed parking area for the site is over 400 feet away, further up the hill, which would require families to walk to the property, around a blind corner and cross the road at the worst point, presumably carrying canoes or bags. If a car tried to unload at the site, the car and occupants would be invisible to anyone driving on Cross Point Road from at least one direction and would be forced to park in the travel lane (see line of site photographs). It is unrealistic to think that people will carry their kayaks, chairs and picnic boxes from the parking area (which is considerably further up the hill than the point the line of sight photograph was taken from), instead of just parking on the side of the road in front of this property to unload.

The current in this stretch of the river is strong enough to submerge a mooring ball. Not a problem for experienced kayakers, but parents would need to watch their children carefully, whether they were swimming or canoeing.

Edgecomb residents do have other places to picnic and enjoy the water. There is already a much larger picnic area just up the road at Fort Edgecomb, where families can enjoy all the same waterfront activities.

\$225,000 is a lot of town money to spend on such a tiny piece of land, even if it was possible to launch boats there, but spending such an enormous sum on a picnic area, most of which is a steep bank, is not good use of town funds. Edgecomb has many more pressing projects to spend this kind of money on.

The cost to the town does not stop with the purchase. The float would need to be replaced, as any inspection will show. Other areas of the dock need attention. The parking area further up Cross Point Road would need to be cleared and large stumps removed. The road surface would need to be improved and maintained. Garbage would need to be picked up and or removed from the property.

Summary:

It would be irresponsible for the town to encourage the purchase of this land due to its dangerous access for the public and the cost for the small area that is usable. The town clearly has more pressing needs directly related to public safety, which should be our highest priority now. If the town's boat excise tax is contributing to the funds used to purchase the property, shouldn't we be able to launch and retrieve the boats that are helping pay for it? If the town encourages this purchase, they will not only be mis-using and wasting town funds, now and in the future, on a very small picnic area and ineffective small boat launching area - they will also be exposing themselves to considerable liability by creating an accident waiting to happen.

Coming down the hill, most of the property and any parked cars across the road or children crossing are completely obscured from the driver's view. Cars and trucks are often traveling quite fast at this point and the sight distance is very short. The picnic area is the sunlit spot on the left, where the road disappears from view.



This picture was taken only **120 feet** from the site, approaching in the other direction, heading south. The picnic area is on the right, out of sight to the driver. From further back, even parked cars would be hidden.

