



# Town of Sudbury

## Historical Commission

historical@sudbury.ma.us

Flynn Building  
278 Old Sudbury Road  
Sudbury, MA 01776  
978-639-3387  
Fax: 978-443-0756  
[www.sudbury.ma.us/historicalcommission](http://www.sudbury.ma.us/historicalcommission)

**MINUTES**

**JOINT MEETING WITH**

**BRUCE FREEMAN RAIL TRAIL ADVISORY TASK FORCE**

**MARCH 9, 2021**

**VIRTUAL MEETING**

The Sudbury Historical Commission members entered the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Advisory Task Force joint meeting at approximately 9:10 p.m.

Mr. Hagger called the Sudbury Historical Commission into joint session with the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Advisory Task Force. Mr. Hagger requested Sudbury Historical Commission roll call: Diana Warren-present, Diana Cebra-present, Jan Costa-present, Taryn Trexler-present, Steve Greene-present, Marjorie Katz-present, Chris Hagger-present

BFRT Advisory Task Force Members introduced themselves in a roll call: John Drobinski-present, Lana Szwarc-present, Dick Williamson-present, Glenn Pransky-present, Richard Morse-present, Charlie Karustis-present, Frank Vitale-present

### **Historical Resources Discussion**

Mr. Drobinski stated that the Task Force looked forward to working with the Historical Commission to ensure that historical features on the Rail Trail be successfully preserved and protected.

Mr. Hagger acknowledged that the Sudbury Historical Commission was formed in 1968, whose mission is to preserve the historical, cultural and archeological assets of the Town. Mr. Hagger detailed that the Commission recently held two Special Meetings to cover the historical, cultural and archeological assets/inventory on the described rail trail. Several SHC Members have walked the BFRT and have identified additional historical elements that were not listed on the Inventory List. He noted that Sudbury has a huge number of historical railroad artifacts.

Mr. Hagger commented that the greatest concern of the Commissioners is that unlike the Central MA Railroad Corridor which has been studied by the Commission for at least a year, there has

not been an historical, archeological or cultural resource survey completed for the railroad corridor presently being considered. He added that typically, that study would have already been done. And the Historical Society would be examining such survey, focusing on each artifact. He acknowledged that Ms. Suedmeyer has been compiling such a survey listing based on information that the Town might have, but there are a considerable amount of artifacts that are not included on that list. Mr. Hagger emphasized that a complete listing of historical, archeological and cultural artifacts must be completed to consider items to be preserved along the Trail.

Mr. Hagger offered to present the artifacts submitted by Ms. Suedmeyer. He added the SHC has been working with a member of the Wayland Historical Commission, Rick Conard, who is an expert on the Metro-west area rail lines. Mr. Hagger detailed that Mr. Conard recently walk the trail with a SHC member and identified some artifacts which were not on the Inventory List.

-2-

Mr. Williamson acknowledged a document from the Weston Historical Society on the history of the MA Central Railroad with thorough documentation with text and references to Wayland and Weston artifacts. Mr. Hagger responded the SHC has familiarity with that document and hired a preservation consultant who had inventoried and mapped all the artifacts along the 3.5+ mile corridor of the MA Central Railway in Sudbury, including photos and historical context, which is on present for the BFRT.

Ms. Warren mentioned that Mr. Conard is the author of the book about the History of the Central Massachusetts Railroad.

Ms. Suedmeyer stated that the BFRT Advisory Task Force did not yet have the opportunity to review the report submitted by Mr. Conard and suggested that such text and photos be shared with the Task Force. She recognized that related information would continue to be added to that listing/inventory. Mr. Robison acknowledge that SHM member Steve Greene and Rick Conard are the experts in this area, and added many significant features to that listing which is a work in progress.

Mr. Hagger provided item/s location when detailing the related inventory:

#### Bruce Freeman Rail Trail – Sudbury Segment

#### Historic Resources Inventory and Proposed Treatments (3/1/21 Draft)

- Railroad Ties and Tracks throughout
- 2 Electrical Cabinets
- 3 Concrete Pads
- 4 Cattle Crossings

- 12 Wood, Metal, Rail Concrete Pads
- 2 Granite Posts
- 3 Whistle Posts
- 4 Signs
- 3 Stone Wall Segments
- 1 Rail Tie Step
- 51 Utility Poles

Mr. Hagger suggested that the siding area of the Trail could house rail pieces which could be viewed and interpreted from the bike trail. He stated that if all rails were removed, the historic feature could not be appreciated, and recommended that some rails be preserved. Mr. Hagger added that Mr. Greene discovered rail rests along the trail which is a rare/unique historical feature to be added to the inventory list. Mr. Williamson asserted the rails should be preserved at the diamond and the BFRT crosses at the diamond.

Ms. Suedmeyer detailed that the right of way where the diamond is located is within the MBTA corridor and as part of the Eversource project is north of the right of way. Everyone agreed that the diamond was a very special and significant feature.

Mr. Hagger addressed the rarity of the electrical cabinets feature and noted that one was in fairly good condition, and at least one should be able to be seen from the rail trail. He proposed that part of the rail also be preserved in the area of the cattle crossing. In Weston, the historic rail was weaved alongside the cattle crossings on the right trail and the cattle crossings can be seen as well. Mr. Hagger referred to the photograph of the trail in Weston. Members of the BFRT Advisory Task Force expressed interest.

Mr. Hagger noted that the Commissioners requested photographs of the posts, indicating the some should be saved and restored.

Mr. Hagger stated that the granite mile posts and the whistle posts should be preserved and may be restored and relocated during construction. Mr. Hagger opined that interpretive signage would be most useful here.

Mr. Hagger mentioned the location of the former train station, the North Sudbury Train Station. Mr. Hagger confirmed that the Commissioners discussed the importance of the North Sudbury Train Station with Mr. Robinson, which should be highlighted and interpreted.

The Freight House was a feature listed on the Inventory List and the siding area could be a great location for interpretation and preserve that railroad siding.

Mr. Williamson noted that the former location of the Sudbury Station was north of Hudson Road on the east side, and the nearby home was the old train station. Mr. Hagger noted the Commissioners had discussed that building.

Mr. Hagger stated that the bridges on the Mass Central Rail Trail have significance as well. He indicated the SHC wanted the Task Force to consider that design of a new bridge to be similar to that of the proposed bridge at the Wayside Inn on the Wayside Inn Road and encouraged Fuss & O'Neill to consider the design of that bridge or any other historical-type bridge design. Mr. Hagger confirmed that Mr. Robinson and other team members at Fuss & O'Neill would consider design of other historical bridges. He suggested that the steel component of the bridge to be rebuilt, be preserved and place near the new bridge so the public can appreciate the significance of the original bridge structure and read about it on an interpretative panel nearby. Mr. Drobinski confirmed that the Task was interested in replicating the type of bridges that Mr. Hagger mentioned.

Mr. Greene presented several associated findings:

- The location of the Sudbury Railroad Station location was on the east side of the tracks, about halfway between the track intersection and Pantry Road and Haynes Road. He stated there would be a comprehensive report to follow with pictures to include on a suggested interpretive panel.
- The relationship between the Bowker Store and the Station where Everett W. Bowker served as the Station agent for a period.
- The rail rest located around North Road which is the only example of rail rests along the trail. He provided pictures of the rail rests. He detailed that the two rail rests are mounted on the rails and are very solid. Mr. Conard added that rails would break and the rail rests served as retrieval for an additional rail and be used as a replacement rail. Having rails positioned along the line in advance, expedited the process for repair of the track. Mr. Hagger reiterated that these two rail rests were in good condition and should be highlighted with a smaller interpretive sign.
- A Kiosk installed at the beginning of the rail trail at North Road. As a historical point, Mr. Greene noted that along North Road there was a tavern, a blacksmith, a stage coach site and reason the Station might have been on North Road according to an 1875 map; a proposed station was noted at North Road where the train comes across the track. He added that some of the cartographers after that time, embellished previous maps and took credit for it. He indicated that the North Road entry should detail the farms, including the Hayes property with seven or eight buildings on the site. Mr. Williamson added the Davis Ice Cream Company was located on North Road also, where Davis Field got its name. Mr. Greene acknowledged that such history should be included on the interpretative panels.
- Mr. Greene discovering state one of the milepost was mismarked, which could be corrected.
- Mr. Conard spoke of the discovered flanger sign served to direct snow plows which instructed the operator of the snow plow to raise the flanger blade under the snow plow which plowed the snow adjacent to the flange of the rail and bring in the wings of the snowplow approaching a crossing or a switch. If added, if there was a flashing or crossing obstruction, the flange would be raised

so the blade under the snowplow would not tear out the railroad crossing. Mr. Greene commented there are examples of three such flanger signs at Haynes Road (from both sides), one approaching the diamond, and a sunken one recently discovered.

- Mr. Greene referenced an 1892 document detailing the rather lengthy process involved with establishing interlocking signals; ten years before an electrical connection system was finalized in order to syncretize the intersection, the diamond. Mr. Conard provided detail regarding the stopping of trains with signals at the crossing of the railroad and also an advance signaling, called an approach signal (a mile or so before the interlock or the home signal) which Mr. Greene found south of Hudson Road.
- Mr. Greene agreed with adding smaller interpretive signage along the trail to distinguish structures along the railroad and addition to the larger proposed signs which help narrate the history of Sudbury.

Mr. Hagger maintained there has been no archeological resource analysis/survey along this corridor and usually the Indian tribes are included in such survey. Ms. Suedmeyer noted that for the purposes of the Task Force, such inclusion has not been discussed and as part of the MA DOT construction project, the MA DOT Cultural Resources Unit is responsible for helping review and guide that historic review process, which includes contacting tribal officers and will be facilitating such coordination and will also understand archeological studies, which are required as part of the project. Ms. Suedmeyer detailed that the resource unit representative will provide additional information regarding his related recommendations.

Ms. Warren added that this project is subject to a National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 Programmatic Agreement, agreed to by the Federal Highway Administration and the MA State Historic Preservation Officer and the MA Historical Commission with the MA DOT. She acknowledged that additional Tribal officers are not subject to or involved in the Programmatic Agreement but are entitled to engage in the Section 106 review process as governmental entities and may need to signoff on the design of the project, for the project to advance. She emphasized the importance of Tribal inclusion in a consultation process and noted as an example, the Narragansett Tribe THPO. Mr. Drobinski recommended the Task Force and SHC work with the project consultants to close whatever gaps are presented, with a process going forward. He agreed that collective dialogue must continue.

Mr. Drobinski provided proposed interpretative signage locales and asked about SHC thoughts in this regard. Mr. Robinson stated he would share proposed SHC sign locations with the BFRT Advisory

Task Force and then work in concert at a future meeting to finalize and submit to Ms. Suedmeyer to include in the design plan.

Mr. Hagger adjourned the Historical Commission meeting.

