

RAIL TRAIL CONVERSION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Town of Sudbury, Massachusetts
Minutes of Meeting on May 11, 2006

Present: Pat Brown, Betty Foley, Madeleine Gelsinon, Bridget Hanson, Dennis Mannone, Jennifer Pincus, Bill Place, Nancy Powers, Dick Williamson, Carole Wolfe.

Absent: Eric Poch, Bob Hall, Sigrid Pickering.

FST representative: John Hendrickson

Also present: Jim Nigrelli and Melanie Weaver.

Public Comment

There were no public comments prior to the meeting.

The meeting was called to order at 7:35 P.M.

Past Minutes:

The minutes of the meeting on March 9, 2006 were unanimously approved. The minutes of the team evaluating proposals for the engineering feasibility on April 24, 2006 were also approved. There was no RTCAC meeting during April, 2006.

Informational Items:

1. Dick Williamson distributed a handout describing the developments along the former Framingham Lowell rail corridor during the past several months. These include the Mass Highway redesign of the Phase I right of way, on which construction may start in late 2006 or early 2007; and the success this spring in town meeting of appropriations for 25% design studies by the other towns in the Phase II section of the right of way.
2. Dick Williamson reported that he is editing a draft of the CTPS feasibility study—a proof of concept, rather than an engineering feasibility study—for the right of way from Route 20 to Route 9, which is owned by CSX. This study should be released in by early summer of 2006, and is expected to recommend conversion of this section of the right of way into a trail.
3. Dick Williamson reported that representatives of EOT (Executive Office of Transportation) will meet in early June with Marcia Rasmussen (Town Planner of Concord) and the Friends of the Bruce Freeman Trail from various communities along Phase II of the Lowell-Framingham right of way to discuss having EOT remove the rails from the corridor and having EOT negotiate with CSX to purchase the southern portion of the right of way. Dick will communicate this to Maureen Valente, Sudbury Town Manager, to see whether she believes the Town should be represented. He will also inform the Board of Selectmen of this meeting. Dick plans to attend as a representative of the Friends of the Bruce Freeman Trail and will observe for (but not represent) the Town of Sudbury at this meeting.

Status of the Request for Proposals (RFP)

Bill Place, Town Engineer, reported the status of the Request for Proposal for an engineering feasibility study of the conversion of the rail corridor into a rail trail. The main events were:

1. Twenty four copies of the Request for Proposal as approved by the Sudbury Board of Selectmen at their March 28 meeting were distributed to the companies on the list of possible participants.
2. Six proposals were submitted to the Town of Sudbury prior to the April 7, 2006, deadline in response to the RFP.
3. These six proposals were reviewed by the RFP Evaluation Team prior to the team meeting on April 10, 2006. At the evaluation team meeting, three of the proposals were selected for further consideration. The evaluation team was composed of Pat Brown, Madeleine Gelsinon, Bridget Hanson, Dennis Mannone, Jennifer Pincus, Bill Place, Nancy Powers, Dick Williamson, Eric Poch, Bob Hall, and Sigrid Pickering.
4. The companies submitting these proposals were interviewed on April 24 by the RFP Evaluation Team. The team recommended to the Sudbury Board of Selectmen that the proposal from Fay, Spofford, and Thorndike (FST) be accepted by the Town.
5. On May 2, 2006, the Board of Selectmen accepted this recommendation.
6. On May 11, 2006, a contract with the Town was signed by FST to perform the feasibility study described in the RFP.

Bill Place has been designated as the liaison between the Town of Sudbury and the firm of FST for the preliminary engineering evaluation of the corridor by the Town Manager. The Rail Trail Conversion Advisory Committee (RTCAC) also designated Bill as the liaison between the RTCAC and the firm of FST. Communications with FST from the Committee should be directed to Bill.

Public Safety Subcommittee

The Public Safety Subcommittee had not met. They committed to formulating the list of public safety questions described in the March 9, 2006 to bring back to the RTCAC for discussion prior to the June meeting.

Status of informational meeting

Pat Brown proposed holding an informational meeting to communicate information concerning the proposed trail with the public. The information presented would include the right of way under consideration, the results of the survey of trail neighbors done by the RTCAC in the summer of 2005, the current status of the project, standards for trail design, and funding mechanisms. The meeting would also provide an opportunity to receive feedback and input from the public at large. No input from the general public has yet been solicited. Dick Williamson noted that it is difficult to get good attendance at such an event during the summer, and proposed that the meeting be held during the first week of September. Pat agreed with this timetable, but observed that the information to be presented is static, so the RTCAC can assemble this presentation starting now and continuing during the summer.

New Business

The committee composed a list of tasks for the next three to four months.

1. *Refine the list of public safety questions* formulated by the Public Safety Subcommittee and request a meeting with Sudbury Public Safety officials at their convenience.
2. *Conduct a site walk of the right of way* with the full RTCAC and members of FST in attendance. This would provide a forum in which issues observed along the right of way could be discussed. A long discussion of times when both RTCAC members and FST representation would be available culminated in the decision to walk on Tuesday, May 23, and Thursday, May 25, at 5:00 pm, walking half the right

of way (ROW) on each occasion. These early dates would permit RTCAC to discuss the right of way with FST representatives soon enough to allow FST to use that input in their evaluation. The timing would also permit the walk to occur prior to dusk and prior to the path becoming more overgrown than it already is. Dick Williamson committed to informing absent committee members of these walks.

Bridget Hanson suggested that Debbie Dineen (Conservation Commission), John Hendrickson (FST), and FST environmental specialist Marshal Dennis walk the ROW during the daytime to identify and discuss specific environmental issues.

3. *Create the presentation for the informational meeting*

Bridget Hanson proposed that the RTCAC summarize the information we have acquired in the past several months to update the Board of Selectmen. Jennifer Pincus suggested that the Committee use an open-house forum both to solicit information from and to present Committee findings to the general public. John Hendrickson, the FST representative, proposed that the informational meeting be deferred until the presentation by FST in November. He believed that presentation by FST would address many of the questions likely to be raised by the public, and answers to these questions would not be available earlier. Pat Brown was concerned with the very tight proposed timetable. Since a request for CPA funding at 2007 Town Meeting for a 25% design study for the trail would have to be presented to the CPC in December, she believed that postponing the informational session until November made it difficult to consider carefully any public input. John responded that in such meetings the public offers good input, but wants answers to all its questions immediately. Bridget Hanson indicated that a meeting in the form of a charrette, rather than a lecture type presentation, would facilitate the flow of information without raising the expectation that all questions would be answered. Dennis Mannone stated that he wanted to wait until the FST study was at very least 90% completed before meeting with the abutters. It is his experience that people want to have specifics during any discussions, and that very tangible study results are required to address the questions that arise. Dennis also noted that the CPC would prefer a “placeholder” for likely requests for funding as early as possible, but Carole Wolfe remarked that the proposals come in until the mid-October deadline. Bridget added her observation that the choice of soft surface or hard surface is one of the major decisions about the trail on which committee members have strong and divergent opinions, and that it would be useful to gain an understanding of the preference of the townspeople about trail surface to focus on appealing designs.

The committee formally voted to present a charette-style public informational event tentatively scheduled for September 14, 2006, at the Town Hall. This would present information at various stations around the room, with photos, maps, written materials, and opportunities for comment. RTCAC members would be present to talk with members of the public. This meeting would serve as an opportunity for the public to learn about the proposal, to express support and concerns, and to summarize the accomplishments of the RTCAC. It would also serve to lead into the November presentation of the study by FST.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 P.M.

Community Comments

There were no public comments following the meeting.

Submitted by Pat Brown on May 21, 2006