

RAIL TRAIL CONVERSION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Town of Sudbury, Massachusetts
Minutes of Meeting on August 23, 2007

Present: Pat Brown, Betty Foley, Madeleine Gelsinon, Bob Hall, Bridget Hanson, Chris McClure, Jennifer Pincus, Eric Poch, Nancy Powers, Dick Williamson

Absent: Debbie Dineen (ex officio), Dennis Mannone (ex officio), Bill Place (ex officio) and Carole Wolfe

Also Present: Residents Dan DePompei and John Donovan, member of the Agricultural Commission

There was no community input. The meeting was convened at 7:35.

The Minutes of the July 26, 2007 meeting were approved after reviewing the change suggested by Bridget Hanson.

Old Business

Organizational Matters

Chairperson Pat Brown began by reviewing several organizational matters, the first of which was to introduce Chris McClure who was appointed to the Rail Trail Conversion Advisory Committee (RTCAC) by the Board of Selectmen (BOS) at its August 14 meeting. Chris replaces Becky Corkin as the Conservation Commission's representative on the RTCAC. Chris is also an abutter to the trail.

Pat also reported on the status of the two RFPs still to be issued for the studies approved by the Community Preservation Committee and Town Meeting. The Town Manager and Town Counsel are still working on them. The RFP for the wildlife study will be posted in the Central Register on August 27. It is being sent to about 10 consulting firms. The contract cannot be awarded on that study, however, until the title search has been completed demonstrating that EOT has clear title to the right of way. A copy of the final version of the RFP will be sent to all Committee members. Dick Williamson wondered why recommendations from the study by the Wildlife Task Force of the Colorado State Parks was to be used in evaluating the impact of the rail trail when Debbie Dineen had indicated at the previous meeting that other previous studies of environmental impacts of rail trails were not relevant to the Sudbury effort. As none of the members had seen the Colorado study there was no attempt to answer his question.

Several documents have been posted on the RTCAC website, including the update on the Committee membership and the two CTPS feasibility studies of 1987 and 2003 regarding the southern sections of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail. Pat found that the 2003 document is actually a part of a much larger document that is posted on the website of the Metropolitan Planning Organization, as she had advised Committee members in a recent email message.

Dick Williamson was concerned that Craig Della Penna would not want his document "Home Sales Near Two Massachusetts Trails" to be amended before posting; the RTCAC had agreed last month to remove a sentence including a link to the Friends of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail website from the copy of this document posted by RTCAC. Pat Brown agreed to email Mr. Della Penna to verify that this change was acceptable to him.

Pat has repeatedly asked to be updated by the BOS on matters of the RTCAC membership. She will inquire again about representation of the Park and Recreation Commission, which continues to be lacking.

The next item was for the Committee to agree on a meeting schedule through the end of the year. The members agreed to meet at its regular time, the fourth Thursday of October (the 25th), on the fifth Thursday of November, as the fourth is Thanksgiving, and on the 27th of December if enough members are available to constitute a quorum. Pat cautioned the members not to take on too much work in the preparation of the Notebook for the BOS, or other tasks for that matter, in order to maximize their impact on the Committee's work and to be able to meet the assigned deadlines.

Finally, she asked for a volunteer to write an article on the Committee's work this year for the annual Town Report. As there were no volunteers Pat "volunteered" to do it herself.

Project Tracking for the Notebook

Eric Poch distributed a first draft of an Excel file he will use to keep track of the Committee's work on the Notebook that is being prepared for the BOS. All of the information to be included in the file should go through the Committee. Eric will own the file. Administrative changes, however, such as changes in the way the information appears in the document, can be made through email exchanges as long as they do not include substantive changes. Chris McClure suggested the addition of two columns to indicate the status of successive versions of project reports, such as "First Draft", "Final Draft" and "Approved Report". Eric will revise the format of the file to incorporate these and a few other suggested changes and send it to Committee members next week.

Zoning Board and SCIAC Communications

The Zoning Board and the SCIAC were not among the Town Commissions and Committees that received letters from the RTCAC welcoming input with questions and concerns about the rail trail they might have. Jody Kablack had indicated in a reply to Pat Brown that she did not think it would be necessary for the RTCAC to meet with SCIAC about possible conflicts between town center improvements and the rail trail. SCIAC was aware of the proximity of the trail crossing of Hudson Road, and at present there are no proposals being considered by SCIAC that would affect the intersection. Jody indicated that the Village Green redevelopment plan may present a problem. Eric pointed out that it is already apparent that driveways for the Village are problematic. Pat voiced her concern that the driveways proposed in the FST study are very close to the Peakham intersection. There was general agreement that a traffic plan for the Peakham intersection was a high priority and that whatever that plan might be it should not interfere with the trail crossing. This should be made clear in letters to the BOS, the Zoning Board, SCIAC and the Planning Board.

Subcommittee Organization

Conservation Subcommittee

The new makeup of the subcommittee is Bridget Hanson, Chris McClure and Carole Wolfe. It has not yet had a chance to meet.

Commercial/Agricultural Subcommittee

Betty Foley, Madeleine Gelson, Eric Poch and Dick Williamson are the members. Pat Brown will inform the Agricultural Commission that this subcommittee has been formed. John

Donovan, a member of the Agricultural Commission, who was in attendance at this meeting, was obviously aware of this immediately. Eric will contact the Commission to find out what concerns it might have that were not covered in the previous meeting and to inquire about the best way for the two bodies to stay in contact. Nancy Powers suggested that the Agricultural Commission use email to notify members of the subcommittee of its meetings in which items pertinent to the rail trail are on the agenda.

Submission of Items for the Notebook

History of the RTCAC

As Pat Brown's history is in nearly final form much of the discussion was about how it should be labeled, to whom it should be sent and how. Pat suggested that we send only complete information, but Bridget asked whether it might be sent in quarterly draft form. Nancy suggested that we ask the BOS how they want it, while Eric suggested that perhaps the tracking document submitted quarterly might be sufficient. Dick Williamson agreed and said that the BOS can always ask for additional information. On the question of what to call the report, there appeared to be agreement that the file would be labeled as a 'version', rather than a 'draft', although Bridget thought that versions other than the final one should be stamped "Draft". Dick asked whether the quarterly reports are to be sent to the Town Manager, Maureen Valente, or to the BOS. Dennis Mannone will maintain the database on his town computer and will prepare the reports for submission.

Dick Williamson reported finding a letter in his files from Maureen Valente to members of the Bike Trail Committee suspending that committee on October 20, 2003. Dick had also brought to the meeting a copy of the Town Crier in which a history of the railroads in Sudbury had appeared, hoping to find in it the date the last train ran on the north-south Sudbury line. Carole Wolfe had requested that date be included in the history. The date was not included in the article and will have to be determined from another source. Carole had also suggested in an email message to the entire Committee three other additions to the history, although there were some uncertainties about what they were. Pat will look into them and make needed corrections or additions. Because these and other parts of the quarterly report to the BOS will not be approved before the September meeting Bridget suggested that the report be ready for submission in October. The Committee concurred.

History of the Trail Along the Entire Corridor

Dick brought copies of the latest version of the regional overview prepared by the subcommittee made up of Friends of the BRFT. It included new material and many references that had not appeared in the previous version. As he had just finished typing it that afternoon the Committee was not in a position to consider it at this meeting.

Public Information on Other Trails

Assabet River Rail Trail. Bridget reviewed briefly her discussion with Michelle Ciccolo, assistant town manager in Hudson, who played a major role in the development of the trail. Bridget's review, which she had distributed via email to the Committee, is essentially finished; but there are still a few more questions for which she will try to get the answers in follow-up email before putting it in a more finished form.

Minuteman Bikeway. Dick Williamson had not been able to work on this since the last meeting.

Nashua River Rail Trail. Jennifer Pincus also had been unable to find time to pursue research on this trail.

Wachusett Greenway. Carole Wolfe was not present to discuss her research on this trail.

Assignment of Notebook Items

This task will be deferred until the next meeting.

In closing, Dick commented that Steve McLaughlin, the project manager for MassHighway on the construction of the rail trail from Lowell to Chelmsford, which will get underway in September, asked if he could receive a copy of the history of the entire trail when it is ready. Dick also noted that Michelle Ciccolo will speak again to the Friends of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail at the Wingate Sudbury on September 10 at 7:30. Everyone is invited.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:25

Public Comment.

John Donovan said that the notice to the Agricultural Commission that the RTCAC subcommittee had been formed should be sent to the Commission's chairperson, Laura Abrams. He expressed concern that the trail crossing on Hudson Road might present a problem for the fire department if trail users try to cross the road when there is a fire emergency, perhaps leading to a traffic backup that could impede the movement of fire engines. It was pointed out that one solution to the problem is to have the lights near the station under control of the fire department in the way they are at the North-Road station. John once again reiterated his strong support for a hard paved trail. Pat Brown said that a citizens group made the claim that the Minuteman trail should not be considered accessible unless it is plowed in the winter. That, of course, would not allow cross-country skiers to use it. Most rail trails in Massachusetts are not plowed in the winter, so ordinarily no one except cross-country skiers can use them. Dick Williamson noted that the Town could close the trail in winter.

Submitted on August 29, 2007 by Bob Hall

Approved September 27, 2007