

RAIL TRAIL CONVERSION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Town of Sudbury, Massachusetts
Minutes of Meeting on January 11, 2007

Present: Pat Brown, Betty Foley, Madeleine Gelson, Bob Hall, Dennis Mannone, Jennifer Pincus, Eric Poch, Nancy Powers, Dick Williamson, Carole Wolfe.

Absent: Bridget Hanson, Sigrid Pickering, Bill Place

Also Present, Residents Miner Crary, Dan DePompei and Jim Nigrelli,

Community Input: None of the residents present had anything to say at this time.

Past Minutes: With several additions and corrections by Carole Wolfe the minutes of the December 14 meeting were approved.

Update on the Request for CPC Funding

The Committee had not been informed of the outcome of the Community Preservation Committee's decision to approve or not approve the use of funds for the three studies recommended to the BOS by the RTCAC. Carole Wolfe had heard that the studies were approved by the CPC and will appear on the warrant for town meeting. The wording of the warrant articles is not presently known.

Status of the Letter to Town Boards and Commissions

Nancy Powers had sent the letter to the several town boards and commissions seeking input from them about any concerns they might have and expressing a willingness to meet with them. They were sent to the Conservation Commission, the Park and Recreation Commission, the Planning Board and the Historical Commission. Bill Place, who is to receive hard copy responses to those letters, has not yet had any, nor have responses been received on the committee mailing list. Nancy will follow up by sending the letter by email to the chairpersons of those bodies, their personal email addresses being available in the selectmen's office.

Subcommittee Reports:

Conservation Subcommittee: Carole Wolfe, the only member present, asked what information the RTCAC would like at this time. Pat Brown made two requests: (1) That the subcommittee express its views on the revision of the FAQ and (2) Indicate what issues are of concern to the subcommittee in the three studies for which CPA funding has been requested.

Public Safety Subcommittee: Dick Williamson said that this subcommittee had not met. Pat Brown emphasized that this will be the major topic of the meeting in February in which the full committee must be ready to provide the best information it can about safety issues to the Board of Selectmen (BOS) before town meeting.

Dick noted the death of a pedestrian where the Assabet River Rail Trail intersects Route 85 in Hudson on January 5, 2007, **reported in the Middlesex Daily News online**. Pat Brown emphasized that this tragedy strongly indicates the need for great care in the design of road-trail intersections, such as one where the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail might cross Route 27 if it is built, particularly since this intersection has a very similar configuration to the one where the fatality

occurred. Dick also reported on an incident of solicitation on a road near the Wachusett Greenway in West Boylston, which has led to a joint-town bicycle patrol that is now in place. He also noted Craig Della Penna's article in the "Northeast Greenways Solutions" about safety issues on the Manhan Trail in Easthampton, MA in which the police chief dispelled rumors that there was a great deal of unlawful and undesirable behavior on the trail. A search of the police records for a two year period listed 7 service calls noting trail addresses, none of a dangerous kind. He noted that the department has about 13,000 calls a year, but only about 4 on the rail trail.

Dick also took this opportunity to mention two studies that he has recently encountered concerning the use of rail trails and the development of methods to estimate usage and the level of service (LOS): "Salem-Concord Bikeway Demand Estimate" and "Evaluation of Safety, Design and Operation of Shared-use Paths." Both studies employed data of several kinds from other trails across the country, the Minuteman in Lexington included in both. In the second study a model was developed to assign grades for the LOS as a way of guiding the design of new trails. This is the same study as that presented at the November 9, 2006, meeting by Pat Brown, and indicates both that increasing trail width and decreasing the number of trail users contributes to an enhanced experience for those on the trail. Methods very similar to those employed in the Salem-Concord study were employed by CTPS in the "Feasibility Study, Proposed Extension of the Bruce N. Freeman Memorial Path in Sudbury and Framingham", in which data from the Minuteman Bikeway were adopted as a reference. The estimates of daily weekday use for the Sudbury-Framingham trail derived from two slightly different calculations were 250-300 users a day, about one tenth the number on the Minuteman.

Update of RTCAC Materials

Library Materials and Website Links

The two studies noted in the preceding paragraph are not to be placed in the library until they have been approved by the RTCAC. Materials that have been approved by the Committee should be placed in both the library and on the RTCAC website when possible. Dick Williamson has made an effort to clear out the outdated materials that have been in the reference drawers at the Goodnow Library and will continue that effort. Pat Brown will assist him and also update and verify website links.

The Posted FAQ

Dick Williamson distributed copies of his revision of the FAQ document that was posted on the RTCAC website two years ago. Most of the remaining time at this meeting was spent in a group editorial effort to refine the answers to everyone's satisfaction, and the answers to all but six questions at the end of the list that Dick had not attempted to answer were approved. The members of the Committee are to submit as many updates as possible to these questions to Dick by the end of next week, January 19.

New Business:

Informational Items:

Update on CSXT Negotiations: There was no progress to report about the ongoing negotiations between the towns of Sudbury and Framingham and CSXT regarding the lease or

purchase of the CSXT-owned right of way (ROW) in South Sudbury and Framingham. Dick Williamson had attended a meeting this afternoon of town representatives from several towns that are all trying to purchase CSXT railbeds in order to develop rail trails. All are having trouble because of the high purchase prices CSXT is asking. Framingham has recently obtained permission to begin negotiations with CSXT.

Natick Task Force for the Cochituate Rail Trail: Dick Williamson had been invited to attend a meeting of the Natick Task Force to provide input about the way Sudbury has approached the problems attendant on the development of a rail trail. The task force has a similar composition to the Sudbury RTCAC and appears to be approaching rail-trail questions about the southern section of the Cochituate Rail Trail in much the same way as this committee has.

Rail-Trail, Bicycle, Pedestrian Caucus Dick Williamson and Bob Hall attended this event at the State House on December 7 regarding insurance that would relieve the towns of any liability, greater than \$50,000, for any unexpected environmental contamination found in the development of rail trails. Matching grants from the state would assist in the purchase of the insurance for \$25,000 over the 5-year term of the policy to the towns, with coverage up to at least 3 million dollars. At present AIG is the only insurance company that has joined this program, and it will negotiate the specific terms of any policy on a case-by-case basis.

The Meeting was Adjourned at 10:00 P.M.

Community Input:

Jim Nigrelli said that he had five questions about answers to the FAQ, and because of the late hour he asked if he could submit them to the Committee by email for discussion at the next meeting in February. He was told he could.

Dick Williamson asked Jim if he wished to comment on the request by Citizens for Responsible Land Stewardship, Inc in both Sudbury and Concord to the Massachusetts Environmental Protections Agency (MEPA) for an advisory opinion regarding the legality of any changes made to the ROW of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail before a full MEPA review. Jim indicated that the purpose of this request was to avoid damage to the ROW from such activities as trail clearing before a thorough environmental assessment is made that might impose restrictions on what is allowable.

Submitted by Bob Hall on January 16, 2007

Resubmitted on February 8, 2007

Approved on March 8, 2007