

**RAIL TRAIL CONVERSION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Town of Sudbury, Massachusetts
Minutes of Meeting on June 14, 2007**

Present: Pat Brown, Betty Foley, Madeleine Gelsinon, Bob Hall, Bridget Hanson, Dennis Mannone (ex officio), Jennifer Pincus, Nancy Powers, Dick Williamson, Carole Wolfe
Absent: Becky Corkin, Debbie Dineen (ex officio), Bill Place (ex officio), Eric Poch
Also Present: Residents Mimi DiMauro, John Donovan and Melanie Weaver

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

Old Business

Before she summarized the June 5 meeting of the Board of Selectmen (BOS) Pat Brown noted that the RTCAC Conservation Subcommittee should work together with the Conservation Commission and Debbie Dineen to finish the RFP for the wildlife study working from Debbie's draft of the document. The document should be in the hands of the RTCAC in July so it can be reviewed in August. Pat asked Carole Wolfe to keep her informed of their progress.

Pat then distributed a few copies of a list of questions Becky Corkin had obtained from the Conservation Commission regarding the questions the RTCAC had prepared as part of the assignment given the Committee by the BOS. Pat will distribute that list to the entire Committee via e-mail in the days to come.

Membership Changes of the RTCAC

The BOS at their June 5, 2007, meeting changed the role of Town Staff serving as member of the RTCAC. All Town Staff serving on the Committee will now be ex officio—that is, they will not vote on Committee decisions nor count toward quorum, but will continue to attend meetings to provide the Committee with the benefit of their expertise. Conservation Coordinator Debbie Dineen has served in this capacity since June 17, 2005, at her request. The Conservation Commission had requested that she be reinstated to voting status on the RTCAC. The BOS placed all Town Staff serving on the Committee in the same ex officio status, pointing out that Town Staff does not usually hold voting positions on Town committees.

The RTCAC will now consist of 15 members, including three town staff members (Debbie Dineen, Bill Place and Dennis Mannone) serving ex officio, and three board and commission members (Eric Poch from the Planning Board, Becky Corkin from the Conservation Commission and a member from the Park and Recreation Department, who is yet to be identified. The RTCAC also currently has nine at-large members, of whom one (Carole Wolfe) is an abutter, five (Betty Foley, Bob Hall, Jennifer Pincus, Nancy Powers, and Dick Williamson) are members of the Friends of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail advocacy group, and three (Pat Brown, Madeleine Gelsinon, and Bridget Hanson) are members not associated with either of these groups. Pat has requested that the member to be appointed to represent the Park and Recreation Commission be true to both assignments, and actively communicate between the two bodies. The Selectmen will seek an appropriate member candidate for RTCAC from Park and Rec.

Clarifying the Mission Statement

The June 5, 2007, BOS meeting also addressed the role of the RTCAC. The principal role of the RTCAC is to be understood now as providing information to the BOS, specifically to create a set of documents covering factual data on a wide variety of questions that will assist the BOS in forming a decision about whether the town should proceed with the development of the

Bruce Freeman Rail Trail. So-called Phase 3 of that trail, extending from south Sudbury almost to Route 9 in Framingham, is not to be included in this fact-finding mission. Dick Williamson pointed out that Phase 3 was included in the original Mission Statement, so this new charge represents a significant change. Pat Brown had specifically verified at the June 5, 2007, BOS meeting that this focus was the intent of the Selectmen and the Town Manager, and was meant to help the RTCAC make progress in addressing the requirement for information on which the selectmen could base decisions about the proposed trail.

Schedule of Future Meetings and Election of Officers

Pat Brown had inquired of Committee members what nights of the week they would regularly be available to meet in the hope that a night could be found when the conference room in the DPW building would nearly always be available. The fourth Thursday of each month was found to work very well, and the next meeting will take place on July 26.

Pat then addressed the question of electing new officers, inquiring first whether anyone would step forward to take her own position as chairperson. No one was willing to accept that responsibility, nor was anyone ready to relieve Bob Hall of recording the minutes of our meetings. Pat and Bob then agreed to remain in their positions until October, the anniversary month of the Committee officers, when the question will be posed again. Madeleine Gelsinon asked how long the RTCAC would exist. It seemed clear to everyone that it would be functioning until December, 2008 when the BOS will make its decision about continuing development of the trail. The BOS will probably decide whether the Committee will continue to function and what its mission might be at that time. Dick Williamson pointed out that the role of the RTCAC in Sudbury has been very different from that of the Concord Rail Trail Advisory Committee, which has been mainly in an advisory role in the implementation of the trail rather than for information gathering as it has been in Sudbury.

Submission of Items for the Notebook

History of the RTCAC

Pat handed out her first rough draft of the second section of the information requested by the BOS. She admitted that the organization was ad hoc and that it contained a number of redundancies that were all the more apparent when a draft of the history of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail in the other towns along the rail bed was examined. The draft, written by Dick Williamson, was the product of the RTCAC members who are Friends of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail. However, she was unwilling to delay collecting information until the Committee approved a format. She requested that Dennis inform the Committee if there was a format preferred by Town Staff as more useful or accessible. It was clear that the same information was pertinent to the development in each town, but it was decided that a single time line to cover all of the towns would make the organization of the Notebook extremely complicated, so for the moment at least it appears that the redundancy is preferable to confusion, and each town will have its own timeline. Pat will add information to her first draft and make other changes before the July meeting, noting that the presentation to the citizens on September 14, 2006 was a joint effort of the RTCAC and Fay, Spofford and Thorndike.

Pat reminded the Committee that the first installment of information specified by the outline should be submitted to the Board of Selectmen by September, 2007. This is approximately one calendar quarter after the outline was distributed to the RTCAC on May 10, 2007. It requires that rough draft information be ready for consideration by the Committee in July, that the Committee approve the information in August, and that the Selectmen receive it in September.

Questions to be Asked in the Regional Overview of Rail Trails in Massachusetts Towns

Nancy Powers pointed to the difficulties she had had in trying to obtain information from town websites regarding their rail trails. Carole Wolfe noted that some information, concerning funding for example, could be gleaned from the warrants for town meetings, which are always posted. The question arose about how many towns should be included in the survey. It became clear that the Committee had no firm estimate of how many trails of significant length there are in Massachusetts. Bob Hall said he would try to get that information by the next meeting.

Dick Williamson pointed out that there are no published data for any Massachusetts trail for the last question in the initial list regarding estimated numbers of weekly users by season or quarter, broken down for within-town and out-of-town users. This led to a discussion of whether the RTCAC should attempt to obtain such data on its own, that is, by doing counts and whatever else might be necessary to achieve that. The complexities involved in such an endeavor were readily apparent, not to mention the labor intensive aspect of the task. Several methods have been used in studies elsewhere, but there is no general agreement about the best way to obtain useful estimates.

The discussion of specific questions that this Committee might pose began with Bridget Hanson's enumerating some that occurred to her. Nancy Powers also distributed a list that she thought should be included, and all of these questions received cursory consideration, being too many to allow for an in depth discussion of any one of them. Jennifer Pincus volunteered to take all of the extant lists, including the questions posed verbally at this meeting, and combine them in some orderly way for more extended consideration at the July meeting.

With an agreed upon list of questions four Committee members took on the assignment of searching the websites of the four towns in our region that have rail trails for as many answers as they could find.

Bridget Hanson: The Assabet River Rail Trail

Jennifer Pincus: The Nashua River Rail Trail

Dick Williamson: The Minute Man Rail Trail

Carole Wolfe: The Wachusett Greenway

Dennis Mannone suggested that links to information obtained from those sites should be saved so they can be included in the master file he will maintain.

RTCAC Subcommittees

There has been no change in the makeup of the Conservation Subcommittee, which includes Becky Corkin, Bridget Hanson and Carole Wolfe. The Subcommittee functions without a chairperson. The Public Safety Subcommittee is not engaged in any ongoing work and feels that its initial assignment was completed. As it has no new charge there is no present need for it, and the Committee agreed to disband it.

John Donovan, a member of the Agricultural Commission, was permitted to say a few words before the meeting was adjourned, pointing out a need for someone or a subcommittee from the RTCAC to be working with the Agricultural Commission to address the concerns of the farmers in town. Farm lands, he claimed, abut more than half of the ROW. He elaborated on those concerns briefly in the Community Input after the meeting was adjourned.

Comments on Town Meeting

Carole Wolfe had several things to say about things said at town meeting. First she noted that Selectman O'Brien claimed that members of the RTCAC attended meetings of the Sudbury Center Improvement Advisory Committee (SCIAC). This apparently was not true, as no one

present had done so. Bridget also noted that SCIAC was asked if it was going to coordinate with the RTCAC. There were no plans to do so. Pat Brown said she would contact the SCIAC to arrange for a possible meeting of the two committees or some representatives from each.

Carole reported that Selectman Drobinski in his presentation of the rail-trail articles said that the trail might be paved with wood chips. Dick pointed out that was the selectman's way of saying there was no decision about how the trail would be paved; everything was on the table.

Carole's next point was that Dick Williamson had said at town meeting that the wetlands delineation in the field survey was undertaken to "appease" the opponents. She objected to this because the Board of Selectmen and Town Manager had decided to include this item after it had explicitly been omitted by RTCAC from the original request for funding. The delineation remains valid for three years and must be repeated if it has expired. Dick Williamson said that he had not used the term 'appease', and no one on the Committee could remember his having used it. His recollection was that he had said the survey was considered initially because of concerns expressed by rail-trail opponents. Finally, Carole felt that the Community Preservation Committee should have made clear to the town that the monies requested were for studies that are normally part of the 25%-design phase of trail development that normally occurs following a decision to construct a trail.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:35.

Community Input

Mimi DiMauro expressed the view that in the Committee's efforts to get as much factual information about rail trails as it can it should not try itself to collect the raw data, or make measurements, which would be difficult and inefficient. She also noted that her two requests to have links in the article by Craig Della Penna removed from the RTCAC website had not been honored. The article was about the effects of rail trails on real estate prices and selling times, and the links were in contravention to her understanding of the Town Manager's policy that the Town website not be used as a portal for other organizations. She would like to know why these links have not been removed.

John Donovan, a member of the Sudbury Agricultural Commission, confessed some confusion about the makeup of the RTCAC and in particular who the abutters are on the Committee, noting that none of the farmers whose lands abut the rail bed are represented. He had applied to become a member recently, but received no answer to his application. Ms. DiMauro suggested it would be appropriate for the RTCAC to approach the Town Manager about John's application. It was pointed out that there are presently no openings on the RTCAC. Mr. Donovan said that the farmers are very concerned about the effects the trail might have on their businesses, especially with regard to safety issues and liabilities resulting from the use of hazardous chemicals and large-equipment traffic.

Submitted by Bob Hall on June 22, 2007

Resubmitted on July 10, 2007

[Approved July 26, 2007](#)