

**RAIL TRAIL CONVERSION ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
Town of Sudbury, Massachusetts  
Minutes of Meeting on August 28, 2008**

**Present:** Pat Brown (chairwoman), Betty Foley, Madeleine Gelsinon, Bob Hall, Bridget Hanson, Nancy Powers, Carole Wolfe

**Absent:** Debbie Dineen (ex officio), Dennis Mannone (ex officio), Jennifer Pincus, Bill Place (ex officio), Jennifer Pincus, Eric Poch, Dick Williamson

**Also Present:** Residents Dan DePompei, Margaret Hardy

**Community Input:** There were no comments at this time.

**The Meeting was convened at 7:40 P.M.**

**Old Business:**

*Updates:*

Developments related to CPC Projects

Pat Brown summarized a telephone conversation she had with Town Manager Maureen Valente on August 21, regarding the status of the survey and wetlands delineation and the wildlife study, both being carried out with CPA funds approved at the 2007 town meeting. She had sent her summary to Committee members in an email message dated August 22, 2008. Excerpts (italicized) from that message follow:

*"Bill Place (Director DPW) received the survey/wetlands delineation on July 24, as I mentioned in my e-mail thread below. Bill, Debbie Dineen (Conservation Coordinator), and Jody Kablack (Town Planner) reviewed this information. They have forwarded their recommendations to the Town Manager, who then asked other staff to review it. There will be a meeting in September of Town Staff (all) on a number of rail trail issues, not limited to the Wildlife Study and Survey/Delineation. The Town Manager and Town Staff have made no determination on whether the requirements of Article 24 from the 2007 Annual Town Meeting have been met. Until it has been determined that these requirements were met, the entire \$105,000 appropriated by Town Meeting remains appropriated. A decision on whether these requirements have been met may (be) expected "at a time indeterminate"."*

*"The wetlands violations (by Atlantic Engineering when they cut down trees along the ROW) are being worked out between the Conservation Commission and Town Counsel Paul Kenney. Again, a decision on how the Town and contractor will address these issues is expected "at a time indeterminate.""*

*"The Town Manager hasn't yet made an absolute decision on whether or when there would be a public presentation of information obtained from the wildlife study. She anticipates this study will supply a description of "what was found". In her estimation, the contractor was to collect data and not drill into what it means. The Town Manager had anticipated no information made available on a quarterly basis."*

Carole Wolfe understood that the wetlands delineation had not been completed and asked if the contractor would get paid for just the work that has been. She and Bridget Hanson both said that the reports should all be placed on the town website whether or not they have been

completed. Carole also said there should be public presentations by Call of the Wild, the wildlife consultant, as the RTCAC had suggested. The Town Manager had reiterated in her conversation with Pat Brown that the RTCAC's role is to obtain information pertinent to rail-trail development that would allow the Board of Selectmen (BOS) to make a well advised decision about going forward with the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail in Sudbury, not to delve into the implications of the data. Bridget had talked with Ms. Valente about this, which prompted her suggestion that a section be added to the Notebook consisting of recommendations derived from the information the Committee has assembled. A motion was made to do this, and in its final form included the specific recommendation that follows. A section of recommendations should be added to the Notebook, and the first one should be that the RTCAC and BOS should listen to the concerns, together with possible mitigations, of all abutters - residents, farmers and business people - before the design phase of the BFRT, and convey that information to the responsible parties. The motion passed unanimously.

Bridget asked if there were any responses to her email message to the Committee of August 19 suggesting that the data collected regarding the funding of rail trails be presented in a matrix, which she presented as a starting point. Some of the members present had not received the message, so there was not much discussion of the idea. Bob Hall suggested that we wait until final stages of data collection before we try to formalize it that way, as he felt it generally helps to know just what the whole matrix will include before trying to organize it.

Pat Brown raised the question of where Dan DePompei had found the information that the Town of Sudbury had listed the BFRT as a top priority on the Project Information Form (PIF) submitted to the Transportation Planning and Programming Committee (TPPC). Dan said he found the information on the MPO website. Hayes Morrison of the Central Transportation Planning Staff confirmed that information in a letter to Pat. Carole said that Bill Place submitted the information using the Acton submission changing only the name of the town and his own name as the responsible party. Pat asked if Sudbury officials have already decided to go ahead with the BFRT what is the need for the RTCAC. Bridget noted that other towns along the ROW have government official interested in pushing the rail trail forward; Sudbury does not.

On another topic Pat noted that the projected meeting known as Golden Spike III, a meeting devoted to discussion of rail trails in Massachusetts involving rail trail enthusiasts from all around the Commonwealth, has been moved from Sudbury to Leominster, still scheduled for September 13. The idea of such a meeting was prompted mainly by the DCR impending lease of the MBTA ROW from Belmont to Berlin, a section previously known as the Wayside Rail Trail, a part of the Mass Central Rail Trail. Madeleine Gelsinon asked if the RTCAC would have anything to do with that trail. There is nothing in the current mission statement to indicate it would. Negotiations between DCRT and the MBTA are still ongoing.

Pat next reviewed the story about EOT's (EOTPW) removal of some rails in Concord, which it did without notifying the town. Because it owned the rails and was operating within the ROW boundary and was planning to use it elsewhere on EOT property it felt no need to advise the town. This raised the more general question of who would benefit from the removal of rails and ties along ROWs being converted to rail trails. The answer is whoever owns that ROW. Bridget said that the director of DPW in Hudson had recommended that the removal of rails is best done as part of the construction process. It is easy to find someone who will do that.

### **Subcommittee Reports:**

*Commercial/Agricultural Subcommittee*

Madeleine Gelsinon's report on the agricultural community was to introduce Carole Wolfe's very detailed responses to the questions that are being posed to all of the farmers whose land abuts the ROW. Carole's extended response was not obtained in an interview with Madeleine, but written on her own. Pat Brown requested that the standard header for this class of documents be added, and without much discussion of this lengthy document Madeleine moved that it be approved for inclusion in the Notebook. The motion passed unanimously.

*Conservation Subcommittee:*

Carole had nothing new to report. She inquired if Chris McClure is still a RTCAC member. Pat responded that as far as she know Chris is still a member of the Conservation Commission and, therefore, still a member of the Committee.

**Submission of Items for the Notebook:**

*Public information on other trails:*

Assabet River Rail Trail: Bridget had circulated the results of three telephone interviews she had with DPW people in Marlborough and Hudson and with the conservation agent in Marlborough. The documents she submitted were all in good shape and were approved unanimously for inclusion in the Notebook. Bridget commented that she was surprised to learn from the DPW Director in Hudson that No-Trespassing signs were effective in stopping trail users from gaining access to the trail from a subdivision road that ended in view of it. No fences were required. She also noted that some member of the Friends of the ARRT had identified five farms abutting the trail who were supporters of the trail. This did not include the Honey Pot farm. She also noted that in Hudson they had difficulties with a stone-dust surface. Carole asked where the difficulties were, and it was apparently near parking places. Priscilla Ryder, the conservation agent in Marlborough, recommended permeable pavement. Bob Hall noted that the material was expensive, but Bridget learned that it was not when used in large batches.

Minuteman Bikeway and Nashua River Rail Trail: There was nothing new to report on these two trails.

Wachusett Greenway: The Committee had seen Carole's report on this trail and suggested several changes, mostly to condense and reorganize the information. Carole will revise the document for review again at the October meeting.

**Organizational Issues:**

The Committee had to decide when it would meet in November and December, as the regularly scheduled meetings will fall on Thanksgiving and Christmas. It decided to skip the November meeting and meet only once on December 11.

**The meeting was adjourned at 9:40 P.M.**

**Community Input**

Dan DePompei asked if private residents of Sudbury would be invited to submit recommendations to the RTCAC for inclusion in the Notebook. He was told they would. Dan also asked why the paths in the Assabet Wildlife Refuge in Hudson are so narrow, only about 4 ft. wide. The answer seems to be that there are many constraints such as stone walls and trees.

Submitted by Bob Hall on September 7, 2008

Approved on September 25, 2008