

RAIL TRAIL CONVERSION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Town of Sudbury, Massachusetts
Minutes of Meeting on March 27, 2008

Present: Pat Brown, Betty Foley, Madeleine Gelsinon, Bob Hall, Bridget Hanson, Jennifer Pincus, Nancy Powers

Absent: Debbie Dineen (ex officio), Dennis Mannone (ex officio), Chris McClure, Bill Place (ex officio), Eric Poch, Dick Williamson, Carole Wolfe

Also Present: Residents John Donovan, member of the Agricultural Commission, and Jim Nigrelli.

Community Input: The residents had no comments at this time.

The Meeting was convened at 7:35 P.M.

Past Minutes: The minutes of the February 24, 2008 meeting were approved with one minor change.

Old Business
Updates

Pat Brown had inquired about the progress of the two CPC projects under way. Debbie Dineen has not yet received a report from Call of the Wild, the consultant for the wildlife study. She is expecting a report on the winter survey and will inquire about its progress. Bill Place sent Pat a copy of the progress report from Atlantic Engineering and Survey Consultants, the consultant for the survey of existing conditions and wetlands delineation. It appears that the work is making good progress, and Pat will send copies of that information to Committee members. Pat also sent upon request the Committee's list of railbed abutters to Debbie and Jody Kablack who were asked to supply it to the survey consultant.

Pat noted two meetings held in Concord this month: a question-and-answer session with the Concord Rail Trail Advisory Committee on March 6, and a presentation on March 17 of the 25% design by Vanasse, Hangen and Brustlin, the plan supported by the Advisory Committee and the Concord BOS. She was unable to attend either, but Dick Williamson, Carole Wolfe and Bridget Hanson did attend the meeting on the 17th. Bridget came away with several points from the presentation: One is that she was surprised to learn that the surface of the path will vary over the extent of the Concord section, including one part that appeared on a map to be dirt. Bob said that he had been under the impression that only asphalt and stabilized stone dust would be used. He checked the 25% design that is available online, and his impression was correct. Another point was that development of the trail does not occur in a vacuum, and there are other major projects under way in Concord, most notably the redesign of the Concord Rotary. The Bruce Freeman Rail Trail has now been given attention in that design, which suggested to Bridget that other ongoing projects in Sudbury, such as the Town Center project, should not forget that a rail trail may be going through the town center. RTCAC has formally communicated both with the Sudbury Center Improvement Advisory Committee (June, 2007) and the Sudbury Board of Selectmen (September, 2007) by e-mail to remind them of this. Madeleine inquired about how the trail was going to get across Route 2. A tunnel is one of the solutions proposed. There is a meeting of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Coordinating Committee scheduled for May 7, by

which time MassHighway will know which of the plans has been adopted at Concord Town Meeting on April 28. Madeleine Gelsinon noted that whatever plan is adopted, the trail will have to be ADA compliant, which means it must be firm and sufficiently hard to support wheel-chair traffic. There followed a brief discussion of stone dust surfaces, but no new information was forthcoming.

Pat has arranged for a meeting with the Sudbury Board of Selectmen (BOS) on May 13 to answer any questions they might have about the progress on the notebook being prepared for them. She will take that opportunity to request once again that if the BOS is going to appoint someone to fill a vacancy on the Park and Recreation Commission that they give serious consideration to someone very interested in the rail trail and willing to attend the RTCAC's monthly meetings. Bridget suggested that this might be a good time to write an overall summary of the progress to date that might be released to the public, perhaps in a press release for which she has volunteered to write an initial draft. The purpose is to let town residents know where the work of the Committee presently stands, as there has not been any widely disseminated information on this for some time. Pat reported also that the old versions of the RTCAC timeline and the regional history of rail trails have been removed from the website.

Project Tracking for the Notebook

Eric Poch was unable to attend this meeting and could not report on the progress of this project.

Subcommittee Reports

Commercial/Agricultural Subcommittee

Madeleine reported on her interview with Honora Haynes who is very much opposed to the rail trail. Ms. Haynes, who has had her horse farm on Morse Road for more than 40 years has three main concerns. Trespassing is one that she has already had to put up with because of Featherland Park next door. Along with the trespassing has come vandalism and theft. The Town promised her a fence between the park and her property about 27 years ago but has never delivered on its promise. She has no confidence that promises concerning the rail trail will be better kept. Her indoor riding rink is very close to the trail, and in the summer the doors facing the trail are left open for cooling purposes. She is afraid for the safety of the students taking riding lessons if the horses are frightened by unthinking people making a lot of noise that could frighten the horses. She described one such incident in which the instructor was able to get a young girl off the pony the girl was riding when some of the girls on the LSRS cross country team running past the rink ran to the door to look in and frightened the animal. Ms. Haynes is also worried about the site lines where the trail on her property crosses Morse Road. On one side is the very sharp bend in the road not far from the crossing, and on the other there is dense growth, making it a dangerous intersection. Ms. Haynes' written response to the questions posed by Madeleine will be included in the notebook.

Conservation Subcommittee

Chris McClure who was to report on the work of this committee had to cancel his plans to attend at the last minute, so there was no report .

Submission of Items for the Notebook

Pat's main concern at this meeting was to refine the Notebook assignments for the RTCAC members, primarily because the original ones appear to be overwhelmingly large. Toward this end the research on a given rail trail will be divided among two or more members, not undertaken by just one person. The work instead will be broken down by town, e.g., the Assabet River Rail Trail will have two investigators, one for Hudson, one for Marlborough. Rail-trail issues and information gathering will employ the same set of questions in each town. The assignments made this evening were as follows:

Assabet River Rail Trail: Bridget Hanson

Nashua River Rail Trail: Jennifer Pincus and Nancy Powers

Minuteman Bikeway: Dick Williamson and Betty Foley

Wachusett Greenway: Chris McClure and Carole Wolfe

Another Notebook topic not previously discussed at length is the laws and bylaws of the state and towns that pertain to multiuse paths. Bridget volunteered again to compile a list of those before the next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 P.M.

Residents Input:

Mr. Donovan told the Committee about his own conversations with Honora Haynes concerning the prospects for her horse farm if the rail trail is built. His information confirms the information Madeleine received, but it added another dimension when he reported that Ms. Haynes had talked with her insurance agent about how much her insurance costs would increase if the trail were built. The agent replied that it would be excessive and that she would be better off selling her property and moving elsewhere. In short, she feels as though the rail trail would put her out of business.

Mr. Donovan again repeated his plea for a hard surface if the rail trail is built. His experience with his wife, who was confined to a wheel chair, has convinced him that any surface that is not as hard as asphalt would do a great disservice to people with similar needs.

Submitted by Bob Hall on April 3, 2008

Resubmitted on April 16, 2008

Approved on April 24, 2008