

RAIL TRAIL CONVERSION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Town of Sudbury, Massachusetts
Minutes of Meeting on October 23, 2008

Present: Pat Brown (chair), Betty Foley, Madeleine Gelson, Bob Hall, Bridget Hanson, Nancy Powers, Dick Williamson, Carole Wolfe

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

Also Present: Resident Dan DePompei

Community Input: There were no comments at this time.

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

The Minutes of the September 25 Meeting were approved without further changes.

Old Business:

Updates

Developments Related to CPC Projects:

Pat Brown said that on September 26th at the Mass Highway Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Committee meeting and again at the October 21 Design Uniformity Committee meeting Bill Place had stated that the survey and wetlands delineation were 90% finished, but he did not indicate when it would be completed. Pat had received no replies to her repeated requests from town officials about the status of the three CPA projects, the survey, title search and wildlife study. She will continue to ask for that information. She noted that the state matching of CPA funds would be only 71% this year, as she had informed the Committee by e-mail on October 22.

Pat will meet with the Board of Selectmen (BOS) on Tuesday, October 28 to present an update on the Notebook. Anything approved in tonight's meeting of RTCAC must be in final form to be presented to the Board of Selectmen at that meeting. All approved materials must be sent to the Selectmen's office tomorrow morning for copying so that the BOS can review the material prior to their meeting on October 28.

Pat announced that the MassHighway hearing on the 25% design for Phase 2A will take place in Acton on October 29. She will again suggest that the BOS designate a Town employee attend as she had done by e-mail on October 18, as the postings indicate that Mass Highway will explain its requirements for adequate proof of title required for corridors proposed for construction of trails.

Other Communications:

Pat briefly went over her notes taken at the meeting of the MassHighway Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Coordinating Committee on September 26. Bill Place represented Sudbury and Pat, Dick Williamson and Carole Wolfe attended as observers. Bill Place announced that the purchase of the CSX right of way in south Sudbury will be completed, it is hoped, by June of 2009. The amount of the purchase is settled, but other issues remain to be resolved. Bill stated that the centerline survey by Atlantic Engineering is 90% complete and that it would be finished soon. He also stated that the results of the Wildlife Study were to be presented to the Board of Selectmen in December 2008. Bill indicated that there was to be a meeting of the Design

Uniformity Committee chaired by Tom Michelman, president of the Friends of the Bruce Free Rail Trail (BFRT), in Sudbury at a time yet to be determined.

Pat mentioned how disturbed she was at “discovering” at 8:00 am on October 21 that the Design Uniformity Committee was meeting in the Sudbury Department of Public Works Building at 5:00 pm that same day. This information came in response to her e-mail question to Bill Place—although Bill nominally serves on RTCAC and he had scheduled the event, he had not informed the Committee of this meeting. Pat’s e-mail informing the RTCAC of the Design Uniformity Committee meeting was of necessity late, and only Pat and Carole were able to attend the October 21 meeting.

This was the second Design Uniformity Committee meeting; the first occurred on September 2 in Acton. Carole reported that she had attended the second meeting of that Committee, which, in her words, is trying to “homogenize” the trail. The committee was formed to deal with various aspects of the trail on which decisions must be made in the near future for Phase 1, which is under construction, particularly those regarding signage and the design details at road crossings. The primary emphasis at this early stage is on features that affect safety, but as Carole noted, virtually every aspect of the trail was on a list of potential subjects for consideration. The very extensive list that Carole read to the RTCAC included things like surface type and width and shoulder type and width. Bridget voiced concern that the Uniformity Committee might dictate attributes of that kind, and she was disturbed that the RTCAC was not informed about the second meeting. Dick Williamson pointed out that some of the uniformity questions came out of the experience on the Minuteman Bikeway. At the second (October 21) meeting of the Design Uniformity Committee, Jody Kablack, Sudbury Town Planner, and Debbie Dineen, Sudbury Conservation Commissioner, both expressed their dissatisfaction about the way that Committee is proceeding.

Pat Brown commented to RTCAC that the rationale for uniformity is that this is a regional project and as such should have some features that convey that fact. Dick Williamson and Bob Hall both argued that the attempts to gain some uniformity in trail features across towns was not a capricious or arbitrary exercise, but rather a necessary one for safety and other reasons. Dick gave an example of the kind of question that has to be answered: Do bikers ride on the right side or left side of the trail? The next meeting of the Uniformity Committee will be held in Acton on Friday, November 17.

Several other items were reported at the October 21 Design Uniformity Committee meeting. Marcia Rasmussen, Concord Town Planner, reported that the meeting of the Project Review Committee to consider the 25% design of Phase 2C in Concord has been postponed a second time, from October 23 until November 6. Bill Place, Sudbury Director of Public Works, again reported that the centerline survey by Atlantic Engineering was 90% complete. Framingham Selectman John Stasik had hoped that the purchase of the CSX-owned right of way in Framingham south from the Sudbury town line almost to Route 9 would be included in the recent purchase of other CSX properties by the state, but had learned that day that this was definitely not the case. Dick Williamson learned that Secretary of Transportation Cohen had previously concluded negotiations and had a check ready for the purchase of the active CSX Boston-Worcester line. In the rush to conclude this sale before the budget crisis prevented any further action, the unused CSX properties were left out.

Pat also mentioned that the draft 2008 Sudbury Open Space and Recreation Plan was posted on the Town website and available for review. RTCAC members had received request

for review by e-mail. She noted that she had already submitted comments on the plan to Jody Kablack, Town Planner and lead author; specifically that the Town should not expect to engage the MBTA in discussions for the east-west corridor, since DCR has been in negotiations for this line with the MBTA since spring of 2008, and since DCR has indicated its intent to develop the line as a rail trail at the September 13 Golden Spike III meeting in Leominster. Pat also requested that the description of plans for the Town to acquire the CSX-owned portion of the line be amended to show that the Town had appropriated the funds to acquire this ROW at 2008 Town Meeting and it was expected that the Town would complete the purchase by June of 2009. Dick mentioned that the review period for the Open Space and Recreation Plan will close on November 15.

The RTCAC submission for the Town Annual Report was approved and signed by all of the members present.

Submission of Items for the Notebook

Public Information on Other Trails:

Assabet River Rail Trail. Bridget had nothing to add to her previous submissions.

Minuteman Bikeway. Betty Foley went briefly over the answers by Jack Johnson, Chair of the Arlington Bicycle Advisory Committee, to some of the questions in the Committee's questionnaire. In general his replies were very positive. Arlington did not have a wetlands bylaw at the time the trail was built, but it does now. There were few abutter issues; most of the responses from abutters were positive. Local realtors report that houses abutting the trail are valued 5% higher than comparable properties elsewhere and sell more rapidly. The town did try an experiment this past winter in plowing the trail. It was apparently a great success, especially with walkers. It was thought that it might have attracted more bikers had Lexington plowed their part of the trail. Bridget asked how they knew about the numbers of walkers and bikers. Dick replied they counted them. Dick also noted that Lincoln Labs wanted the trail plowed so that it's employees could bike to work. Betty will send copies of the questionnaire to Committee members so that approval for submission can be considered at the next meeting. Dick Williamson had submitted material previously considered by the RTCAC in February 2006, when the Committee had questioned the purpose of the interview. Pat asked Dick if the information he had supplied had been from an interview. Dick replied that it hadn't; it was from a video made in 1998. Pat pointed out that the information was quite dated, and that specific items (e.g., that there was no cost for plowing because the trail was not plowed) were no longer true. The RTCAC determined that the information in this transcript of the 1998 video was generally available in the interview with Jack Johnson and decided not to include it in the Notebook. Carole mentioned that she had a newspaper clipping from the July 1, 2007 Globe stating that in a 3-mile Arlington stretch there had been 18 filed police reports over the past year consisting of incidents that ranged from bike-on-bike accidents to a woman who received unwanted sexual advances to men running naked and others urinating in the bushes. Another article from December 12, 2001, stated that Arlington police patrols had been increased on the Minuteman bike path due to a rash of indecent assaults and attempted rapes. In the past two months there had been five assaults reported between 4 p.m. and 6 p.m. on weekdays. The point being, bike paths require patrolling, which is an added cost to towns. There was no discussion of her findings.

Nashua River Rail Trail: Jennifer Pincus was not present and could not report on her findings.

Wachusett Greenways: Carole had nothing new to add to her previous submissions. With reference to the RTCAC FAQ she asked about the validity of the statement made in the Sudbury RTCAC FAQ that says the following: “Before-and-after studies of wildlife near some New England rail trails have shown few or no negative effects on the abundance of wildlife.” Carole asked what studies were being referenced and if they could not be identified directly, she believed this statement should be removed from the FAQ as it is misleading. Dick said he would look up the studies and forward them to the RTCAC prior to the next meeting..

Other Recommendations:

Pat requested that we add to the Regional Overview of the BFRT in the Notebook that the final version of the Massachusetts Bicycle Transportation Plan was completed in October 2008. Bridget suggested, and the committee concurred, that Carole put this information into a FAQ format for the next meeting.

Madeleine Gelsinon reported that at a meeting of the Agricultural Commission Laura Abrams asked if Madeleine would get from Paul Cavicchio an estimate of the number of vehicles that cross the BFRT right of way that runs through his property. Mr. Cavicchio reported that it was approximately 2200 per day. In the winter months, from Christmas through March, the number would be appreciably smaller. The estimate struck Committee members as being very high, more than 200 per hour, 3 or 4 a minute. An actual traffic count would be data that could be included in the notebook; an estimate is far less convincing. Dan DePompei asked if he could make a remark, namely, that the high number might not reflect just the vehicles passing through the main entrance, but all of the vehicles such as carts moving plants and other materials back and forth across the trail. It was agreed that the Committee ask how Mr. Cavicchio arrived at the high number.

Organizational Issues:

The discussion turned to the presentation that Pat would make on behalf of the RTCAC to the BOS the following Tuesday, October 28. Bridget suggested that Pat begin with the recommendations that the Committee agreed to make to the BOS in the Notebook, also noting that communication between the town officials and the RTCAC has been less than satisfactory. She also suggested that Pat make mention of the finding that maintenance of rail trails in the towns we have investigated have not been a major expense. Carole disagreed with this conclusion, noting that VHB, the Concord consultants, had indicated at a Concord town meeting it was substantial. But Bridget countered that in her interviews with officials in other towns they have invariably told her that the costs were too small to break out as separate line items in town budgets. Carole pointed out that maintenance involves a number of things, blowing leaves, dumping trash, getting rid of graffiti, etc. A recent Globe article described how prisoners had been used to perform some of these tasks in Marlborough. The question came up whether maintenance costs include major repairs or replacement, and Bridget replied that the maintenance costs she was addressing and were understood by the officials she had interviewed were the day-to-day, year to year costs, not the costs of major repairs or replacements. Repaving specifically is not included. Nancy Powers suggested that the Committee read the results of the questionnaire from Hudson. Pat asked how towns could know what the costs were if they didn't keep track of them; not keeping track of them doesn't mean they are necessarily low. Carole said

that Michele Ciccolo, the assistant town manager in Hudson in charge of rail trail development, had built into trail budgets the costs of policing and other services, noting too that Sudbury does not have sufficient personnel to do those things now.

The discussion turned to questions about the Committee and whether the Committee will continue to function after the Notebook has been completed. The Committee has done a lot of work, but no one seems to be making use of it. The town does not appear to have any direction with regard to the trail at this time. Nancy opined that the BOS has too much work; it might well do with five members rather than three. None of the Committee members knew whether Jody Kablack had been assigned as the point person for the BFRT - six weeks after an inquiry had been made to town officials. Bridget offered that the trail project will probably be put on hold in the present economic situation. Pat mentioned that the deadline for requests to the Community Preservation Committee is the end of October.

Proposed Agenda Items

The FAQ is to be revisited at the next meeting.

The Meeting Adjourned at 8:59 P.M.

Community Input:

Dan DePompei asked again why when Sudbury's wetlands bylaws would appear to be violated by the development of the BFRT hasn't anyone considered alternative routes. Bridget noted that the Mass State Bike Plan has off trail alternatives. An alternative route around the Cavicchio Greenhouses on Union Avenue has been discussed before but generally discounted due to insufficient space. Pat reiterated a point she has made on several occasions that the whole "bike universe" has to be considered as the BOS and the town ponder the development of the trails under consideration, especially in view of the DCR's acquisition of the east-west trail from Waltham to Berlin, which intersects the BFRT in south Sudbury. She is eager to see the work of the Committee finished.

Submitted by Bob Hall on November 7, 2008

Resubmitted on December 2, 2008

Third submission on December 9, 2008

| **Approved December 10, 2008**