

Rail Trail Conversion Advisory Committee (RTCAC)
Minutes of Meeting Oct. 13, 2011
Sudbury DPW Building Conference Room
275 Old Lancaster Rd, Sudbury MA

Present: Pat Brown (chair), Bridget Hanson, Bob Hall, Dick Williamson, Nancy Powers, Carole Wolfe, Madeleine Gelsinon, Jennifer Pincus

Absent: Eric Poch

Also Present: Jim Nigrelli, Daniel De Pompei

Community input- there was none.

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m.

Bridget Hanson volunteered to take minutes for this meeting.

Past minutes- The minutes of the Sept. 22 meeting were unanimously approved

Organizational matters- The next meeting was scheduled for Jan. 12, 2012 (tentatively).

Recommendations to the Board of Selectmen concerning “Bring the Trail to Sudbury”

At its Sept 27 meeting the Board of Selectmen had heard a presentation from Tom Michelman, president of the Friends of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (FBFRT). Essentially the proposal was for the FBFRT to raise \$50,000 and donate it to the town of Sudbury for the 25% design of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail from the Concord line to Rt 117 conforming to the TIP process and using Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) design guidelines.. At the meeting two of the Selectmen had referred to the Rail Trail Conversion Advisory Committee and had said they would formally request a recommendation from the RTCAC.

No formal request has been received from the selectmen, but the group felt this would be an appropriate time to discuss the issue and make a recommendation.

Pat Brown asked Dick Williamson and Bob Hall to consider recusing themselves from any vote on this recommendation because they are board members of FBFRT, the organization sponsoring “Bring the Trail to Sudbury.” She had specifically raised this issue privately a week earlier so as not to blindside them. She pointed out that, during the correspondence concerning the proposal, Mr. Michelman had stated that he needed the permission of his board to set the parameters under which the FBFRT would donate the funds to Sudbury—in essence, the Board had crafted the proposal and couldn’t be expected to vote against it. Bridget Hanson said that she did not feel their board membership represented a conflict of interest under the state ethics guidelines. Dick Williamson said that other boards have interest group representation, citing Park and Rec, where some people lobby for lacrosse, others for baseball. Pat stated that Park

and Rec are elected representatives, while the Board of Selectmen appointed the RTCAC to represent the Town of Sudbury; Bob said that he and Dick had been appointed by the Board of Selectmen to represent a specific constituency. Dick and Bob declined to recuse themselves.

Animated discussion followed: Bridget said that a half mile of trail might be a good test to see if it could be permitted in Sudbury. Pat said that Concord can't use federal transportation funds to construct a trail south of Powder Mill Rd (in Concord) unless Sudbury commits to constructing this part of the trail. Since Concord has made provision for only a single parking space for the trail south of the West Concord MBTA station, Davis Field in Sudbury would provide parking for the southern two and a half miles of trail and would act as the southern trailhead. Jennifer Pincus said that ending at Rt 117 makes a good ending point for Concord.

Pat asked whether the 25% design was sufficiently detailed to be eligible for the permitting process. Jennifer responded that the "25% design" was more like 50% and should be sufficient for Conservation Commission (ConCom) review. . A 25% design would include a wetlands delineation. Bridget said that the Commission often will have pre-permitting discussion with applicants, to save them going through a fruitless exercise. Carole Wolfe said that Concord has completed its 25% design, but has not received permits.

Other concerns raised included uncertainty about title and/or easements and the lack of a timeline for the process (either for when funds from the Friends might be available or for when Sudbury must have completed the 25% design), The Friends' plan is a for Mass Highway design but the Town has yet to arrive at a concept plan for the trail in Sudbury. Also, after approving Article 42 at the 2010 Town Meeting, the Town is required to consider alternative routes for the trail.

Carole added that according to Josh Lehman, MassDOT, the Acton/Concord section of the BFRT is on the Priority 100 Baystate Greenway list to be promoted by the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism, thus the trail is more than just a local trail, it would be a regional tourist attraction. She also stated the parking requirements are unknown as are any contingencies and responsibilities the Friends might impose on the Town if the offer of the \$50,000 were to be accepted. She expressed the opinion that the Committee didn't have sufficient information to make a recommendation to the Selectmen.

Ultimately Bridget moved that the RTCAC recommend to the selectmen that they accept the proposal by the FBRFT to raise and donate \$50,000 for the initial (25%) design of the BFRT for 0.5 miles in Sudbury from the Concord/Sudbury line to the sidewalk along the south side of route 117, including a self-actuated signal at the 117 crosswalk.

This motion was seconded by Jennifer and passed by a vote of 5 (Bridget, Dick, Jennifer, Nancy, and Bob) to 3 (Pat, Carole, and Madeleine). Pat will communicate with the selectmen by email to ask how they want to receive this information.

RTCAC submission to town annual report- This item was deferred to the January meeting.

Posting Documents- the group agreed with Pat's proposal to post the following on the Town website under the RTCAC section:

- FBFRT letter and proposal to "Bring the Trail to Sudbury" along with slides of their presentation
- link to second wildlife study and [improved] map (under Conservation Commission now)
- summary of the meeting with the Boston Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) on 3/22/11, presently not represented in our record. The posting will include the link to video of the meeting, link to press release for meeting, and the link to MPO home page.

Other News- Dick offered three information items

- at a recent Bike/Pedestrian conference the Mass Dept of Transportation (MassDOT) announced it has revamped funding process for transportation enhancements: it will hold back \$3 1/2 million a year to use as a match for MPO proposals. For every 2 MPO dollars contributed, MassDOT will add \$1. This could add \$10 1/2 million dollars annually to transportation enhancement funding.
- The Massachusetts Recreational Trails Advisory Board is a group representing all kinds of recreational trails (pedestrian, multi-use, equestrian). Dick is a member and will participate in a presentation on rails trails at the Advisory Board's first annual trails conference on November 12. The presentation will cover the MassDOT process for building rail trails, Dept Conservation and Recreation (DCR) trails, dealing with railways over use of their right of way, and the Iron Horse company, which removes rails without cost to the railway owner.
- Hayes Morrison, longtime manager of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), has left that position to head Somerville's Department of Transportation and Infrastructure. Sean Pfalzer will replace her at the TIP.

The meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Community Input- Jim Nigrelli voiced his deep disappointment that the RTCAC had decided to recommend acceptance of the Friends' offer. Daniel DePompei pointed out that Sudbury had specifically endorsed an investigation of alternative trail alignments at 2010 Town Meeting, which might not be part of a MassDOT design.

Submitted by Bridget Hanson November 22, 2011

Approved as amended January 12, 2012