



# Town of Sudbury

## Rail Trails Advisory Committee

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### MINUTES

November 29, 2023 AT 7:30 PM

### VIRTUAL MEETING

**Members Present:** Glenn Pransky, John Drobinski, Kenneth Holtz, Lana Szwarc, and Laurie Eliason

**Others Present:** Marcia Rasmussen, Planning & Community Development Department, Janie Dretler, Select Board Chair

**Absent:** John Sugrue, and Frank Vitale

On Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (BFRT) Phase 2D, gates have been placed by AA Will at most intersections along with No Trespassing signs, in response to requests from Town. Residents are reminded that these are active construction areas and public use is prohibited. Some vandalism (spray paint) was found several weeks ago on a granite marker south of Hudson Road. This is an area where there was prior vandalism of survey stakes. The contractor and police are aware of the issue.

The Committee reviewed the Fuss and O'Neill report from November 13, 2023 and members were satisfied with progress on Phase 2D. Ms. Rasmussen covered several items related to current construction in her detailed report from Nov 14, 2023. The Hop Brook bridge decking is now in place, mile marker posts are installed in almost all the locations, and key parts of the Pantry Brook Bridge spans were placed earlier today with a large crane. Ms. Rasmussen will complete Sudbury Water Department forms for connection to the two planned hydration stations; these connections from the water supply system are non-participating expenses (not paid for by DOT). Access for Ti Sales has been redesigned to accommodate a 67 ft tractor trailer wheelbase, and it appears that this issue is resolved. The next virtual meeting with the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) and Fuss & O'Neill design engineers will be in early December. We are still awaiting response from MassDOT about constructing a hydration station just east of the Diamond in the Massachusetts Central Rail Trail (MCRT) corridor.

For Phase 3, Fuss & O'Neill requested input on amenities, items to feature along the trail, and other considerations by mid-January, so they can incorporate them in the preliminary 25% design to be submitted to MassDOT. Based on observations during the Rail Trail Advisory Committee (RTAC) site visit to the Phase 3 corridor on Nov 2, 2023, we discussed locations for various amenities and interpretive plaques and trail access. The desired features are included in an annotated version of the October 2023 Fuss & O'Neill Roll Plan for BFRT Phase 3. RTAC members are satisfied with these amenities, and there was no public comment about them. A resident suggested adding additional plaques describing the wildlife and fauna that are

encountered along the trail. We could engage local wildlife expertise to identify optimal locations for these plaques. Could fixed binoculars be installed at a prime location for bird watching?

Members raised concerns about the safety of the Route 20 crossing, especially the risk to pedestrians from traffic turning right on red from Nobscot Road to Route 20 East. Perhaps this is a good location to prohibit right on red turns in this configuration. There were questions about whether the proposed crossing should have a separate HAWK-type signal, or be integrated into the current signal operation (as we have in place now at that location). Additional safety review would be helpful.

All of these design recommendations for Phase 3 will be reviewed with Fuss & O'Neill at our regularly scheduled Dec 13, 2023 meeting.

As a separate item, the Committee is interested in options for improvements at the Diamond, including expanding the scope of the project to potentially include adjacent property for use as parking areas or a park. However, adding new property is not feasible for inclusion in the upcoming 25% design.

Wayfinding - signage to indicate side trails adjacent to Phase 3, and a kiosk with an overview and up-to date information on stores, etc. could be helpful. A resident suggested signs on access / feeder roads pointing to each of the BFRT entrances, and nearby signs to direct people to the rail trails from adjacent roads. These would not likely be included in the MassDOT project, but could be added by the Town later. Discussion about additional location and informational signage will be deferred to the next meeting; it may be hard to predict what residents will want before the trail opens.

Ms. Rasmussen will meet with the Historical Commission next Wednesday, with Park and Rec on Monday, and will post a public update memo next week. Ms. Rasmussen and Mr. Pransky attended a MAPC creative placemaking workshop 2 weeks ago, and will discuss the content more at our next meeting. She will develop a letter for local businesses to solicit their input on trail development. She will also develop policy recommendations for memorial benches, perhaps placing memorial plaques on existing benches as the preferred approach. The Garden Club might help maintain areas along trail.

Ms. Rasmussen will present two items related to rail trails to the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) on December 6, 2023 for funding. The first is a request for \$250,000 to evaluate and perhaps construct an improved access to Parkinson Field. The current dirt road is single lane, unsafe, and has poor sight lines on Hudson Road. The project will include surveying, wetland delineation, design, planning and construction.

The second item is a request for \$750,000 to fund the entire design of BFRT Phase 3. Full design and permitting will be about \$1.2M for Phase 3; we now have \$500,000 from a prior CPC grant and a Mass Trails grant, so the additional funds are needed to complete all phases of design and for some nonparticipating items that MassDOT will not pay for. Current funds are sufficient only to complete the 25% design. This request was initially \$250,000 but was increased to

\$750,000, as the leftover \$500,000 from Phase 2D design funds could not be used for a different project and thus will be returned to CPC. If we don't obtain additional funds, we won't be able to move ahead after May 2024. The total Town investment of \$1.2M leverages Federal Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) money of more than \$7M in construction funds. Submitting the 25% design will get us on the schedule for the TIP once our plan is reviewed and approved by MassDOT. Mr. McQueen suggested that CMAC and the Friends of the BFRT could also support small amounts of the trail construction costs, especially nonparticipating items not covered by MassDOT.

It was VOTED, unanimously to support the Parkinson Driveway Improvement CPC submission, and the Phase 3 design cost submission to CPC.

A list of questions about Town role in maintenance have been developed, that will be sent in written form to specific people responsible for these activities in other Towns along the BFRT and MCRT. This information will be very helpful as we plan for upcoming budget items and personnel allocation after the trails open. Recipients could be planning, public works, and committees that are involved in trails. Committee members may follow up with recipients to ensure complete responses.

Minutes from October 4, 2023, October 18, 2023 and November 2, 2023 were approved with minor corrections.

Thanks to Janie Dretler for facilitating the meeting Zoom connection.

Future Meeting dates: December 13, 2023, January 10, 2024, February 7, 2024, March 13, 2024

Adjourned at 9:05 pm.

Minutes submitted by Glenn Pransky