

## Squannacook River Rail Trail Funding Exploration Committee

Minutes of Public Meeting of Jan 28, 2010 (Approved Mar. 4, 2010)

Location: Groton Town Hall, Groton, MA

Time: 7:30 pm

Members Present: Steve Meehan (Chairman), Bill Martin, Bill Rideout (Secretary), Hirk Fortin

Members Absent: Ken Gerken

Attendees: Peter Cunningham, Bruce Easom, Peter Carson (Groton committee), Al Futterman, Mark Cram, Cheryl Rideout, and Conrad Crawford (DCR)

The meeting was called to order at 7:40. The first part of the meeting focused on a discussion with Conrad Crawford, the Director of Partnerships at the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). After introductions, Conrad briefly described his role at DCR. His outreach was mostly to non-profits, but he had also worked with a number of for-profit businesses. He described the matching funds program he oversaw, which was geared toward capital improvements on DCR property.

We then described to Conrad the two approaches we saw as possible partnerships with DCR. Both approaches involved DCR signing the lease. In the first, DCR would sign the lease if we managed to secure external funding sources to build a paved rail trail. Maintenance would be shared by our group and DCR. The second approach was based on the Wachusetts Greenway model. In this model, we would fund and maintain the trail primarily as a volunteer group, but DCR would make that possible by signing the MBTA lease. We described to Conrad how the environmental liability clauses in the MBTA lease were a serious concern to our towns, whereas DCR now has experience with that lease. We also mentioned that a licensed site professional had already inspected the proposed trail in Townsend and Groton, as described in the preliminary environmental and engineering report.

Conrad Crawford indicated that he thought the stonedust trail approach fit in better with the present direction of DCR. He told us that the head of DCR was really pushing them to find ways of doing more with less by getting volunteers involved, and that our idea was a good example of that. Conrad said that if this stonedust approach was taken, the volunteer group who took over the trail building and maintenance would need to be one with a strong track record. We also talked about how this approach could set an example

that might be followed by other groups in Massachusetts.

Conrad said he felt the next step should be his discussing this approach with others at DCR before any written proposal is submitted. Conrad said that getting the legal team on board would be important, and he wanted to speak with Tom LaRosa at DCR about that. He also mentioned issues with unions might come up. Conrad said that the MBTA lease for the MassCentral line between Waltham and Bolton was very close to being signed.

After Conrad left, the next issue discussed was the Project Initiation Form submitted to MassHighway. Peter Cunningham said that nothing had happened yet, but that he hoped to have a meeting with Ann Sullivan of MassHighway in February.

The next item discussed was the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail. Bruce Easom reported that he had attended a recent Massachusetts Joint Transportation Committee (MJTC) meeting with the new Groton representative David Manugian, and that Sheri Bean from MJTC had contacted the Boston regional planning commission and found out the money for the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail 100% design in Acton had come from an earmark. Bill Rideout reported that Tom Michelman of the Friends of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail told him that the 25% design in Acton cost \$245,250 for the 4.88 miles covered.

Nothing new was reported in either the B&M freight right negotiations or the federal earmark status.

The Townsend minutes passed unanimously. The next meeting was set for Thursday March 4, 2010 at 7:00 in Townsend. Bill Rideout said he hoped to reserve a room in the new Townsend library.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:13 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Bill Rideout  
Secretary, Squannacook River Rail Trail Funding Exploration Committee