

Squannacook River Rail Trail Funding Exploration Committee (Townsend)

Minutes of Public Meeting of Nov 18, 2009 (Approved Dec. 17, 2009)

Location: Town Hall, Groton

Time: 7 pm

Members Present: Steve Meehan (Chairman), Bill Martin, Bill Rideout (Secretary), Ken Gerken

Members Absent: Hirk Fortin

Attendees: Bruce Easom, Peter Carson, Steve Legge (Groton committee), Al Futterman, Mark Cram, Cheryl Rideout

The first topic of discussion was the Project Initiation Form follow up. Al Futterman said that the form went out after having been reviewed by the Townsend Town Manager, Greg Barns. Bruce H. Easom reported that in his discussion with Peter Cunningham earlier this afternoon Peter said that MassHighway will formally review our Project Initiation Form in January of 2010. Bruce reported that Peter Cunningham is attending the Joint Transportation Committee meeting at the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC) this evening and will not be able to attend this meeting. It was noted that the Squannacook River Rail Trail had been dropped from a recent version of the Transportation Enhancement Plan, but was now back on it. Bruce noted that the Groton Board of Selectmen had prioritized four projects for MRPC: 1) Station Avenue, 2) the Squannacook River Rail Trail, 3) Fitch's Bridge, and 4) the Townsend Road & Rt 119 intersection.

The next topic discussed was the follow up with the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). Bruce reported that Peter Cunningham said there was nothing new to report on from DCR.

Al Futterman reported on his conversation with Kristen Wood of Congressman Olver's Office. Al had asked her what the status was of the new federal earmark was. Al reported that Kristen Wood told him that the earmark language has not been drafted yet.

Al Futterman reported that he talked with the Vice President of Real Estate at Pan Am Railways. They spoke about the "consideration" that Pan Am wanted to cover the cost of releasing their freight rights. Al said they said "make us an offer". Bill Rideout reminded the Committee that the City of Somerville paid the B&M \$5,500 to get the freight rights released in Somerville. Bill Rideout recommended getting help from Steve Winslow and get a two-for-one deal as Steve is also working to get freight rights released in Saugus. Bill Rideout asked if freight rights issues were being faced on the Mass Central Rail Trail. No one knew the answer.

The Committee discussed funding for the 100% design. Bruce H. Easom reported that he spoke with Amanda Lewis at the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) about Recreational Trails Grants greater than \$50,000. Amanda said that grants above \$50,000 were very unlikely. Bill Rideout reported that he spoke with FST to get an update on the design cost. He reported that the design cost is unchanged at about \$375,000 or about \$100,000 per mile.

Steve Meehan reported that he saw that the Executive Office of Transportation announced that they have awarded a \$500,000 grant for the 100% design for Phase 2A of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail. Phase 2A goes through Carlisle and Acton. Bill Rideout volunteered to speak with Tom Michelman to get an update on the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail.

Ken Gerkin reported that he attended the Mass Forest and Park Friends Network Conference in Worcester on the 24th of October 2009. Ken said that Conrad Crawford of DCR offered to help the SRRT effort and offered to attend one of our meetings. Conrad Crawford is involved with "mobility" issues at DCR. Ken volunteered to invite Conrad to our next meeting.

The Committee decided that the next meeting should be Thursday the 17th of December 2009 in Townsend.

Respectfully submitted,

Bill Rideout
Secretary, Squannacook River Rail Trail Funding Exploration Committee