

# New England Grassroots Environment Fund

## Grant Application Form

### COVER SHEET

**DATE:** January 10, 2008

**NAME OF APPLICANT ORGANIZATION:** Squannacook River Rail Trail Committee

**CONTACT PERSON:** William Rideout

**ADDRESS:** 88 South Harbor Road, Townsend, MA

**DAY PHONE:** 781 981-5624

**EVENING PHONE:** 978 597-5413

**FAX:** 781-981-5766

**EMAIL:** rideout@net1plus.com

**WEBSITE:** <http://www.SquannacookRiverRailTrail.org>

**AMOUNT OF THIS REQUEST:** \$2,160

**TOTAL PROJECT BUDGET:** As of 2007, the project estimate was \$625,000 to build 2.5 miles of rail trail. This estimate will be updated in 2008 to include 3.3 miles of trail and to adjust for increases in construction costs. In 2005, money for four rail trails in our area, including the Squannacook River Rail Trail, was earmarked by Congressman Olver in the federal highway bill.

**TOTAL CURRENT ORGANIZATIONAL BUDGET:** \$3,075

**TOTAL AMOUNT YOUR ORGANIZATION SPENT LAST YEAR:** \$ 1,020

**NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES, FULL AND/OR PART-TIME:** 0

**PROJECT PROPOSAL SUMMARY (No more than 3 sentences):**

In 2007, the Squannacook River Rail Trail Committee achieved several important milestones toward our overall goal of converting an unused section of railroad into a recreational trail in Townsend and West Groton, Massachusetts. To build on our momentum, we intend to mail informational flyers to each mailing address in Townsend, sharing news of our progress and urging townspeople to continue their support. We request support from NEGEF for this outreach effort, which will strengthen our cause as we advance toward a strategic town meeting in 2008, when residents will vote whether to purchase the lease for the railroad property from the Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority (MBTA).

**HOW DID YOU HEAR ABOUT NEGEF?**

We learned about NEGEF through our association with the Nashua River Watershed Association (NRWA). We applied for NEGEF grants in 2005 and 2006.

**CHECK ANY OF THE FOLLOWING THAT APPLY TO YOUR ORGANIZATION:**

**Ad Hoc group**

**Checking or Savings account in group's name**

**Fiscal Agent** Nashua River Watershed Association EIN 237 055674

**Incorporated as a nonprofit in the state**

**501(c)(3) status with the IRS**

**EIN**

# NARRATIVE

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

**Give a brief description of your proposed project. Be sure to include background of the issue.**

The Squannacook River Rail Trail committee, a group of local volunteers assisted by the Nashua River Watershed Association, has been working since 2002 to create a rail trail in north central Massachusetts. The proposed trail will use a section of abandoned Peterborough & Shirley Railroad, built in 1847, now overgrown and of limited usefulness except by all-terrain vehicles and snowmobiles.

In the past two years, we have achieved several major milestones:

In 2006, we placed a non-binding referendum on the ballot in Townsend's special election to ask voters if the town should pursue a rail-to-trails conversion. Townsend voters turned out in record numbers to show support by nearly a four-to-one margin, passing the ballot question by 1021-259.

In 2007, the town of Groton joined forces with our committee to extend the proposed rail trail, adding 0.8 miles in West Groton to the 2.5 miles in Townsend, for a total of 3.3 miles. Groton is also home to part of the Nashua River Rail Trail, and there is serious consideration now being given to making the Squannacook River Rail Trail part of a regional trail network.

In October 2007, the MA Department of Conservation and Recreation awarded a \$20,000 grant to the Squannacook River Rail Trail committee for a feasibility study on the Townsend portion of the trail. Also, the Groton Fall Town Meeting unanimously approved allocating \$10,000 in Community Preservation Act money for the same study on the Groton portion.

In December 2007, the Squannacook River Rail Trail Committee and the town of Groton selected Fay, Spofford & Thorndike LLC to undertake the preliminary environmental and engineering study of the proposed trail. This study must be completed by a professional civil engineering firm before we can apply for funds that are earmarked for construction of rail trails in our congressional district under the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU).

For more information about the proposed Squannacook River Rail Trail, please see our web site at <http://www.SquannacookRiverRailTrail.org>.

**If your project is successful, what changes will occur in your community and its environment?**

In Townsend, the rail trail will link our major population centers to connect our community in ways that roads cannot. Currently the only link between Townsend's main residential, business, and historic centers is Route 119, a narrow and heavily used highway that is extremely dangerous for bicycles and pedestrians. The rail trail will provide a safer, more scenic, and more direct alternative for bicyclists and pedestrians. Residents will have easier access to our library, town common, historical district, high school, and our only two shopping districts. Older children who want to visit their friends or the library will no longer have to bicycle on a dangerous main road or wait for rides from their parents. The rail trail passes alongside Townsend Harbor, a picturesque pond and dam on the Squannacook River, and will facilitate an inviting walking tour of many of Townsend's historic treasures clustered around this scenic body of water. We feel that this rail trail project would have a dramatic positive impact on the sense of community we feel as a town.

In both Townsend and Groton, the trail will encourage non-motorized activity and bring the much-needed health benefits of outdoor exercise to our increasingly car-dependent communities. The trail accesses several conservation areas, portions of Townsend State Forest, and the Bertozzi Wildlife Management area in Groton. The smooth surface of a rail trail, over a level slope with signage and rest rooms, will provide access for more people, regardless of their skill or fitness level to experience the beauty of the Squannacook River and its surrounding woodlands. It will provide more opportunity for kids, adults, seniors, physically challenged individuals, and families to exercise, explore, walk, run, bicycle, and enjoy the outdoors.

The Secretary of Environmental Affairs has recognized the quality, uniqueness and significance of our natural and cultural resources by designating the Squannacook River as an [Area of Critical Environmental Concern](#) (ACEC). We believe that the rail trail supports the ACEC goals of preservation and stewardship. In an area threatened by development and loss of connection between wildlife habitats, the trail is a step in the right direction toward preserving, restoring, and enhancing critical resources.

**Please include a timeline/steps for its completion.**

- Begin preliminary environmental and engineering study – Jan 2008
- Complete preliminary environmental and engineering study – June 2008
- First mailing to Townsend residents – At completion of study
- Second mailing to Townsend residents – Prior to Fall 2008 Town Meeting
- Request approval to purchase property lease at Townsend town meeting – Fall 2008
- Apply for Federal Highway and State funding for design and construction – 2008
- Begin design phase - 2009
- Begin construction phase – 2009
- Complete rail trail construction - 2011

**PROJECT BUDGET**

**1. Itemize anticipated expenses and income for this Project Proposal. Also note in-kind services (donated materials and/or labor) you may receive for this proposal. Please specify what expenses will be covered with NEGEF’s funds.**

The following estimates for two town-wide mailings to 3,724 Townsend residents including businesses and PO boxes. Costs are based on non-profit bulk permit from the Nashua River Watershed Association.

Cost Item	Estimated expense	Amount requested from NEGEF grant	Income and in-kind services
Develop informational flyer	\$100	None	Layout and content developed by committee members
Print black and white flyers, 8 ½ x 11” two sides including return address and postal permit, tri-fold	\$550	\$550	A portion of printing cost may be covered by NRWA
Produce mailing list, address flyers, sort, complete postal paperwork, deliver to Post Office	\$530	\$530	
<b>Subtotal per mailing</b>	\$1180	\$1080	
<b>TOTAL for two mailings</b>	\$2360	\$2160	

In addition to the direct mailing project proposed here, our committee engages in many other outreach efforts, such as:

- Press releases (included at no cost in local newspapers)
- Presentations to groups such as the Rotary Club and elderly citizens at an assisted living facility
- Booth at local events such as Earth Day and Townsend’s 275<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration
- Poster and map displays, t-shirt sales, and free promotional materials

Volunteers contribute all time and materials for these activities. However, none of these efforts enable us to reach ALL residents, which a direct mailing will ensure.

**2. Principal sources of support (e.g. membership dues, individual donations, grants, special events, etc.) Please list any grants that your group has received.**

Since 2002, the committee has donated our own time and money to support the project. Al Futterman has received limited support from Bruce J. Anderson Foundation. Our total current operational budget consists of \$3,075 from volunteer donations.

In 2007, the Squannacook River Rail Trail Committee was awarded a grant of \$20,000 from the Recreational Trails Program of the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) to fund a preliminary environmental and engineering study by a professional engineering firm. Local volunteers will provide a 20% match through in-kind services.

Also in 2007, Groton voters approved \$10,000 to pay for the Groton portion of the engineering study as requested by the Community Preservation Committee.

# APPLICANT PROFILE

## 1. What is the mission or the goals of your group?

Our mission is to make the rail trail a reality. Our immediate goals are to complete the preliminary environmental and engineering study, obtain approval from Townsend voters to purchase the lease for the railroad property from the Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority (MBTA), and apply for Federal funding from the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) highway bill, along with state funding, to pay for detailed design and construction costs.

## 2. How long has your group been in existence?

We formed in 2002 as a Feasibility Study Committee to investigate the possibility of converting abandoned railroad into a trail. In 2005, the study committee submitted a detailed report of their recommendations to the Townsend Board of Selectmen. In 2006, we formed the larger Squannacook River Rail Trail (SRRT) Committee to move the project forward. In 2007, the town of Groton joined forces with our committee to extend the proposed rail trail into West Groton.

## 3. What issue/issues got your group going?

Our current group assembled in spring of 2006 to place a non-binding referendum on the ballot in Townsend's special election, asking voters if the town should pursue a rail-to-trails conversion. We raised awareness and encouraged people to vote through press releases, lawn signs, a video on public access cable television, and personal contacts. Townsend voters turned out in record numbers to show support by nearly a four-to-one margin, passing the ballot question by 1021-259.

## 4. How many people started the group?

The original Feasibility Study Committee started as a four person group.

## 5. Is this the first time that the group's "founders" had been "activated"? If not the first time, with what other issues had they been involved?

Steve Meehan, Bill Rideout, and Al Futterman are "founders" who have devoted countless hours since 2002. Al Futterman is the NRWA's Land Programs and Outreach Director and holds leadership roles in the Squannassit-Petapawag Areas of Critical Environmental Concern Stewardship Committee and the Pepperell Spring Preservation Committee, which resulted in permanently protecting 265 acres. This is the first involvement in grassroots activism for Bill Rideout and Steve Meehan, but both have demonstrated incredible commitment, leadership, and perseverance.

## 6. How many people are currently involved as the core group of leaders/workers?

We have now grown to at least 15 individuals from two towns and continue to gain momentum for our project.

## 7. Is this a membership organization? If so, how many members do you have? If not, how many names on your mailing list?

Our group has approximately 15 core members, with as many as 35 members mobilizing during key issues such as the ballot referendum. We are not yet a membership organization, but will morph into a "Friends of the Rail Trail" group when our project reaches the design and construction phase. Our core group meets regularly and communicates by e-mail. In addition, we have 129 addresses on our general e-mail list, representing people who signed up to stay informed.

## 8. Do you have any paid staff? If yes, how many full-time equivalents?

Al Futterman, Land Programs and Outreach Director for the Nashua River Watershed Association, receives partial funding from the Bruce J. Anderson Foundation to offer technical assistance to the SRRT Committee.

## 9. Approximately how many people in your community can be "activated" to support your issue – i.e., go to a meeting, sign a petition, call a selectperson, etc.?

In Townsend, our supporters include more than 1,000 people who voted for the rail trail in the ballot referendum. At least 100 people showed outward support by displaying our lawn signs before the election. In Groton, supporters include 150 residents who voted unanimously to use Community Preservation funds for the preliminary engineering study.

## 10. Has the focus of your group broadened or changed at all since it first started? If so, in what ways?

In the past year, our focus has grown to include two towns and our momentum has increased exponentially.

## 11. Have any members of your group run for or been appointed to public office since they started working on your issue/issues? If so, for what office? Elected or appointed?

No one has run for office since working on our issue, but one of our members has offered to represent Townsend at the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission's Joint Transportation Committee, an important decision-making group for prioritizing regional projects in which the town is currently unrepresented. Also, our committee now includes Groton Selectmen Chairman Peter Cunningham, Groton Trails Committee member Bruce Easom, and a three-member Advisory Board that reports to the Groton Board of Selectmen.

**12. Describe the size and make-up of your community.**

Townsend and Groton are rural towns with small-town character, located in northwestern Middlesex County, MA. Groton has a population of 10,406 and Townsend has 9,500. Both towns have a strong sense of heritage and historical preservation. Both struggle to balance steady development with protecting our aquifer and the Nashua River watershed. Government is by Town Meeting with elected Board of Selectmen.

**13. Have you networked or shared information/resources with other groups? If so, with whom and how did you find out about them?**

We have extensive conversations with the Wachusett Greenways (notably Colleen Abrams, Ed Yaglou, and Ida Nystrom), Nashua River Watershed Association, Friends of Willard Brook State Forest, Friends of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail, Ashburnham Rail Trail, MA Department of Conservation and Recreation, and with other rail trail groups. We receive notices of upcoming events via listservs and newsletters. Groton committee members collaborate with the town's Community Preservation Committee and trails committee. Early on, we worked with the New England branch of the Rails-To-Trails Conservancy (RTC). For the general public, we issue press releases and maintain a web site at <http://www.squannacookriversrailtrail.org>.

**14. How have you gained knowledge about your issue?**

Our group exchanges information with the Friends of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail and have attended all of the Trustees of Reservation Putnam Conservation Institute's rail trail workshops. In 2007 we attended the Moving Together Conference in Boston, at which we spoke to many professionals in the field of human-powered transportation and leaders of other rail trail projects. We learn a great deal through the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy and the Nashua River Watershed Association. We have conferred with planning administrators in towns with rail trails and engineering consultants who specialize in rail trails. We are in close contact with the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC) and MassHighway Central District, both of whom will be critical connections when we apply for federal and state funding. We have walked the proposed trail with officials from both groups to identify issues and learn from their experience. We have significant support and interaction with MA State Representative Robert Hargraves and U.S. Congressman John Olver. We learn from extensive discussions with local officials from both towns, including Chief of Police, Conservation Commission, Historical Society, Highway Superintendent, and Superintendent of Schools. Finally, we conducted numerous individual and group meetings to listen to abutter issues.

**15. If your organization is more than a year old, can you quantify any of your "successes"?**

The 2006 ballot vote in Townsend, in which the rail trail passed by 1021-259. This overwhelming endorsement provided the momentum we needed to move forward into the lease negotiations and engineering study phases of the project.

Award of a \$20,000 grant from the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation for the Townsend portion of the preliminary environmental and engineering study.

Unanimous approval at Groton Town Meeting for \$10,000 in Community Preservation funds for the Groton portion of the preliminary environmental and engineering study.

**16. What are the biggest challenges your community faces?**

We must construct and maintain the trail without using town funds. We must minimize the impact on abutting businesses and residences.

**17. What skills do you feel you and/or members of your group could use to help move your issue forward?**

Our committee needs the skills to maintain public support for the project. We must publicize the benefits of the rail trail in terms of health, quality of life, and improved accessibility to open space. We also must deal with critical issues such as abutter concerns.

In December 2007, we contracted the engineering firm of Fay, Spofford & Thorndike (FST) to conduct the preliminary environmental and engineering study. FST has extensive experience in designing rail trails, including the Nashua River Rail Trail and the Nashua Heritage Rail Trail. We expect FST to bring public relations and other skills we need to move our project forward for the next several months. To continue where FST leaves off, our committee will need to learn from them and develop strong public relations skills to see the project through to completion.

## ATTACHMENTS

- A. EIN of fiscal agent Nashua River Watershed Association
- B. List of key members with affiliations, brief bio-sketches, and e-mail addresses
- C. Financial statement for 2007 and budget for 2008
- D. List of local media with contact person
- E. Selected press clippings

## List of Key Members

**Steve Meehan** (Chairman)      [Bordertown05@aol.com](mailto:Bordertown05@aol.com)

Steve Meehan has been a Townsend resident since 1970. Steve currently lives in the West Townsend section of town with his wife and children. He has masters degree in business administration and is employed as a contract negotiator for the U.S. Department of Defense at Hanscom Air Force Base in Massachusetts. He is also an avid camper and fisherman.

Steve's involvement with the rail trail began as a skeptical abutter and he has championed the approach of understanding the concerns of residents and businesses abutting the railroad. This is his first experience with a local environmental group, but his calm and straightforward manner has made him an effective spokesperson for our committee. He frequently addresses the Board of Selectmen and other town boards and public meetings. Steve was the featured speaker in "Making the Case for Rails-to-Trails in Townsend," our documentary film for local cable television public access channels.

**Bill Rideout**      [rideout@net1plus.com](mailto:rideout@net1plus.com)

Bill Rideout, his wife, and three daughters have been Townsend residents since 1987. Bill has a master's degree in physics and computer engineering, and is presently employed by MIT Haystack Observatory in Westford, MA. An Eagle Scout, he has had a lifelong passion for hiking and mountain biking. On any given fall weekend, you are likely to find him biking the challenging trails of Townsend State Forest.

Bill became involved through his daughter's interest in the rail trail for a high school community project. This is Bill's first experience in local activism, but he has dedicated countless hours to the rail trail project since 2002. His focus and organizational skills help to keep our committee moving forward and his commitment is an inspiration to other members.

**Al Futterman**      [alfutterman@NashuaRiverWatershed.org](mailto:alfutterman@NashuaRiverWatershed.org)

Al Futterman has been the Land Programs and Outreach Director at the Nashua River Watershed Association since 1999. Al works on various environmental initiatives and serves as an educator, advocate, and technical provider. Through a recently-received and highly-coveted U.S. EPA Targeted Watershed grant for the "Protecting Today's Water's for Tomorrow" partnership project, he is responsible for landowner stewardship and protection efforts in an 11 town focus area.

Al is the acting chair of the Squannassit-Petapawag Areas of Critical Environmental Concern Stewardship Committee and he co-chaired the Pepperell Spring Preservation Committee, which resulted in permanently protecting 265 acres along Gulf Brook. He has an extensive network among municipal and state officials as well as citizen naturalists and local volunteers. He lives on 50 acres in Ashby, MA with his wife and young son.

**Bruce H. Easom**      [beasom@beasom.cnc.net](mailto:beasom@beasom.cnc.net)

Bruce Easom and his wife have lived on their 15-acre horse farm in Groton since 1994. Bruce is a member of the Groton Trails Committee, Groton Community Preservation Committee, and the Groton Conservation Commission. He has a Doctor of Science degree from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and is doing R&D on new air pollution control technologies.

Bruce's initial interest in the Squannacook River Rail Trail came after seeing the success of the Nashua River Rail Trail that connects the towns of Ayer, Groton, Pepperell and Dunstable. While Groton has an extensive network of trails within its borders, Bruce recognized the need for more of these trails that connect towns together. He was instrumental in getting Groton Community Preservation Act funds approved for Groton's portion of the Squannacook River Rail Trail Environmental and Engineering Assessment.

**Peter Cunningham**      [brecca@charter.net](mailto:brecca@charter.net)

Peter Cunningham has been a member of Groton's Board of Selectmen since 1996 and has been active in town affairs since moving to the community in 1979. Prior to his tenure on the BOS, Peter was a member of the Groton-Dunstable Regional School Committee and worked hard at ensuring community support and funding during a period of rapid enrollment growth.

As a Selectman, Peter is a strong advocate for open space preservation and has successfully realized Town Meeting support for projects involving Throne Hill in West Groton, Gibbet Hill in the center of town, and the recently completed [Surrenden Farm](#) project. He was also a strong supporter of Groton adopting the Community Preservation Act, which has subsequently proven to be an invaluable asset to the community.

The Nashua River Rail Trail is another accomplishment that Peter takes satisfaction in. He was a strong and vocal supporter very early on during the public hearing process, when the project was initially permitted by the MA Dept. of Environmental Management (DEM). When the project languished with Mass Highway and the initial environmental permitting was about to

expire, Peter mobilized a political effort involving officials in the other impacted communities to jump start the trail's construction. Peter is an abutter to the Nashua River Rail Trail and as an active cyclist, uses it frequently.

**Susan Gerken** [picklejuice@verizon.net](mailto:picklejuice@verizon.net)

Susan Gerken has been involved in grassroots initiatives since moving to Townsend in 1962. Susan manages publicity for the Townsend Recycling Committee and has been a strong advocate for the Friends of Willard Brook's successful initiative to acquire and permanently protect from development a 75 acre Vinton Pond property in Townsend's water recharge area. She has worked as a volunteer fund-raiser for Heifer International (<http://www.heifer.org>), a group organized to work with communities to end hunger and poverty and to care for the earth.

A past president of the Townsend Historical Society, Susan provides insight into town history and government. Her husband Ken is also an SRRT committee member and an avid cyclist who has been involved in several nascent efforts to raise interest in a rail trail.

**Joan Wotkowicz** [joan@sebringdesign.com](mailto:joan@sebringdesign.com)

Joan Wotkowicz first became involved as an activist in 1985 with Save Howard Park, a group that prevented Townsend from overturning the designation of "forever open as a park" to build housing on public land near the Squannacook River. The group's efforts culminated in a successful lawsuit by ten taxpayers against the town, thus preserving the parkland. More recently, Joan joined a letter-writing and phone-calling campaign that convinced the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation to ban all-terrain vehicles from Savoy State Forest and begin studying trail damage trails and threats to public safety.

Joan helps to organize the [Greylock Go Round](#), a yearly mountain bike ride sponsored by Friends of the Glen to help preserve 1000+ acres of the Greylock Glen, located at the base Mt. Greylock in Adams, Massachusetts. When not working as a freelance technical writer, Joan is volunteer webmaster for the [Nashua River Watershed Association](#) and the [Monoosnoc Brook Greenway Association](#).

**Mary Barrett** [marybarrett@verizon.net](mailto:marybarrett@verizon.net)

Mary Barrett is a longtime member of the Town of Townsend Memorial Hall Restoration Committee, working to prevent the deterioration of a historic structure. The committee obtained State recognition of the historically significant building as well as a Massachusetts Historic grant for \$100,000 to assist with restoration. Mary campaigned to obtain Town Meeting approval of \$1.8 million to restore this building for use as town offices. She also interviewed, hired, and oversaw the architectural firm and contractor performing the work.

As a member of Townsend's Recycling Committee, Mary educates citizens through the schools, newspapers, websites, Earth Day celebrations, and pamphlets. She campaigned for increased access to the town's recycling facility to provide trash disposal alternatives and she works to educate the public about alternatives to using and disposing of fertilizers and pesticides. As a member of a grassroots citizens' group to prevent mining of the Townsend Landfill by outside interest, she worked to ensure that the town understood the risks of mining an old landfill near the headwaters of our water supply. The group lobbied the Board of Health and Selectmen to recognize the health and legal issues and used pamphlets and phone calls to educate the general public, resulting in a more environmentally sound decision to cap the landfill.

Mary Barrett and Joan Wotkowicz have collaborated previously on grassroots efforts, most notably Save Howard Park and a conservation project along the Squannacook River in which volunteers built a cedar retaining wall and planted native vegetation to address erosion along a recreational trail.



## **Financial Statement**

### **2007 Expenses**

\$625 to Brown and Green LLC for Attorney Steve Winslow fee in Dec 06

\$20 for conference call charges on 3/07

\$375 to PureSpun Apparel for t-shirts for Earth Day 4/07

\$1020 TOTAL EXPENSE \*

\* Expenses such as meeting facility and photocopier have been covered by the NRWA. Other expenses such as booth displays, logo design, business cards, promotional materials, mailing, travel, printer supplies, computer and telephone use have been contributed by volunteers.

### **2007 Income**

\$3,075 from 21 donations

\$360 from t-shirt sales

\$3,435 TOTAL INCOME

### **2008 Projected Expenses**

\$30,000 to Fay, Spofford & Thorndike for preliminary environmental and engineering study

\$2,160 for informational flyers mailed to Townsend residents

\$32,160 TOTAL PROJECTED EXPENSE

### **2008 Projected Income**

\$20,000 Recreational Trails Grant from Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)

\$10,000 from Town of Groton Community Preservation Fund

\$30,000 TOTAL PROJECTED INCOME

## **Media Contacts**

### **Townsend Times**

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### **The Messenger**

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News/Fax: 978-597-5377

## **Press Releases**

Please see <http://www.SquannacookRiverRailTrail.org> for an online copy of all press coverage.

### **Firm hired to study Groton-Townsend trail**

By Hiroko Sato, [hsato@lowellsun.com](mailto:hsato@lowellsun.com)

12/08/2007

*Lowell Sun*

GROTON -- The project to create a 3.3-mile bike/walk trail between West Groton and Townsend is one-step closer to reality after a special task force and the town of Groton hired an engineering firm to conduct a feasibility study.

The Squannacook Rail Trail Committee and the town of Groton announced Thursday that they have both selected Fay, Spofford & Thorndike, a Burlington-based engineering company, to conduct a preliminary environmental and engineering study of the trail. The company has experience of designing both the Nashua River Rail Trail in Ayer, Groton, Pepperell and Dunstable and the Nashua Heritage Rail Trail in Nashua, N.H.

The proposed 3.3-mile trail would run along the abandoned railroad tracks between the Bertozzi Wildlife Management area near Route 119 in Groton and Depot Street in the center of Townsend. After some area residents expressed interest in creating a trail there, Bill Rideout and Steve Meehan, both of Townsend, formed the Squannacook River Trail Committee in 2002. The committee now has members from Townsend and Groton, including Groton Selectmen Chairman Peter Cunningham, Groton Trails Committee member Bruce Easom and Al Futterman, who serves as the land programs and outreach director for the Nashua River Watershed Association.

The state Department of Conservation and Recreation awarded a \$20,000 grant to the committee in October for the feasibility study on the Townsend portion of the trail, and Groton Fall Town Meeting approved allocating \$10,000 in Community Preservation Act money for the same study on the Groton portion.

The study will address various issues, including potential environmental and business impact, parking and road crossings, safety, and abutter concerns. Assessment of the failing culvert at the trail site behind Harbor Village Shopping Center and a preliminary needs assessment of screening and barriers for abutting residences on Main Street are part of the study, as well.

The study is expected to start next month and should be completed in six months, Rideout said yesterday.

### **Groton, Townsend Get \$20G for Trail**

By Hiroko Sato

The Sun, Lowell, Mass.

Oct 24, 2007

Oct. 24--TOWNSEND -- Townsend is one step closer to having the Squannacook River Trail built after the task force received a \$20,000 state grant for the project.

The state Department of Conservation and Recreation has awarded the funds to the Squannacook River Trail Committee, which plans to create a 3.3-mile trail along the abandoned railroad tracks between the Bertozzi Wildlife Management area near Route 119 in Groton and Depot Street in the center of Townsend. The state money will cover a preliminary environmental and engineering study for the 2.4-mile portion of the trail that lies within Townsend, according to committee member Al Futterman.

The railroad tracks, once used by Boston and Maine Railroad, would be transformed into a recreational trail. The MBTA currently owns the railroad bed, and the Groton and Townsend town governments have copies of a drafted release agreement with the MBTA, which would allow them to use the property for 99 years at a price of \$1, said Bill Rideout, assistant chairman of the Trail Committee.

The Squannacook River Trail Committee was formed in 2002 by Rideout and Steve Meehan, both of Townsend, after groups of residents began looking into the possibility of creating a trail there. The committee now has members from Townsend and Groton, including Groton Selectmen Chairman Peter Cunningham, Groton Trails Committee member Bruce Easom and Futterman, who serves as the land programs and outreach director for the Nashua River Watershed Association. Groton

selectmen are currently asking Town Meeting to consider spending \$10,000 in Community Preservation Act money to conduct an environmental and engineering study for the Groton portion of the trail.

Futterman said the committee is preparing to issue a proposal for quotes for the environmental and engineering study for the Townsend portion of the trail. The study will address various issues, including the failing culvert at the trail site behind Harbor Village Shopping Center and a preliminary needs assessment of screening and barriers for abutting residences on Main Street. Engineers will also look at any possible impact on businesses on the south side of Main Street where the railroad tracks passes. Engineers are expected to request input from the Groton and Townsend Conservation Commissions on drainage and wetland issues and from Townsend Historical Society on historic buildings near the trail.

Futterman said the committee hopes to have the engineering study done by late spring. The group plans to tap into federal grants for the construction costs.

For more information about the project, visit <http://www.squannacookriverrailtrail.org>.

### **Townsend voters endorse 2.5-mile rail-trail proposal**

By Aaron Wasserman

*Sentinel and Enterprise*, May 11, 2006

TOWNSEND -- Voters overwhelmingly endorsed a proposal to create a 2.5-mile rail-trail in town at a special election Wednesday evening. A referendum asking voters if they want the town to pursue the project passed by 1,021-to-259 margin, as nearly 80 percent of voters approved the idea. Though the vote was non-binding, the project's biggest proponents said Wednesday's results demonstrate that residents are firmly behind the project.

"I think the people of Townsend have spoken," said Steve Meehan, chairman of the Squannacook River Rail-Trail Feasibility Committee, a private organization that has studied the project for the past three years. "There is public support for this project." The group hopes to construct a trail that will run from the Harbor Village Shopping Center, near the Groton town line, west to Depot Street in the town center. Following Wednesday's results, the town will start negotiating a lease agreement with the MBTA to lease the trails that would be converted.

The committee's members have said they plan to use some of the \$4 million U.S. Rep. John W. Olver earmarked last July specifically for bike paths in North Central Massachusetts to pay for the project. But before they can access the federal money, the committee must pay \$25,000 on its own for an engineering study. Meehan said that grant-writing and fundraising for the study could begin as early as next week.

Property owners abutting the proposed rail-trail had vocally opposed the project in recent weeks, but clearly did not muster enough support to defeat the project. Nonetheless, another committee member, Bill Rideout, said the committee still wants to work together with affected abutters. "As a group we're committed to do this right -- to make sure it doesn't interfere with businesses in town and to take care of abutters' concerns," he said.

Also Wednesday evening, David R. Chenelle was elected to the Board of Selectmen. Chenelle, who was running opposed, will replace Peter H. Collins, who resigned from the board last winter. Chenelle received 1,050 votes.