

Squannacook River Rail Trail Funding Exploration Committee (Townsend)

Minutes of Public Meeting of July 8, 2010 (Approved Aug 12, 2010)

Location: Groton Town Hall, Groton, MA

Time: 7:00 pm

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

Members Absent: Ken Gerken, Bill Martin

Attendees: Bruce Easom, Peter Cunningham, Russ Murray (Groton committee), Mark Cram, Colleen Geddis, Cheryl Rideout, Joan Wotkowicz, Judy Lorimer, and Ed Yaglou (Wachusett Greenways).

The meeting was called to order at 7:10 pm. The first agenda item was a discussion with Ed Yaglou from Wachusett Greenway about their memorandum of

agreement (MOA) with the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) (attached as separate pdf document). This document was of interest to our group as a possible model for a future agreement. Ed noted that the MOA had originally been written by Joe McGinn in 2001, when he was the director of the Division of Watershed Management. Ed said he believed the MOA was written to allow DCR to withdraw from the agreement if things did not work out with Wachusett Greenways. Ed noted that their relationship was still an extremely positive one. Ed noted that the agreement had not placed any additional burdens on their group, and that the required public outreach in the MOA was met with the standard outreach of any non-profit group.

Ed also mentioned that MassHighway was now encouraging stone dust trails. This was a surprise to the group, since the last we heard, MassHighway would only deal with paved trails. Peter Cunningham agreed to contact Ann Sullivan from MassHighway to ask about this, and in particular, whether federal highway money could be used for stone dust trails.

Judy Lorimer from Pepperell spoke about equestrian issues and rail trails. She noted that equestrians often preferred narrower trails than rail trails, but were interested in rail trails as a way of accessing these smaller trails. The committee asked if she could work more closely with her if the trail came to a design stage, so that possibly these equestrian needs could be met.

The committee decided the best date for a second ride with Ed Yaglou would be Wednesday, July 28, 2010 at 5:30 pm. It was decided that if anyone present wanted to invite anyone else on this ride, they were free to do so. The meeting place was described by Ed as the "Midstate Trail parking lot," on Route 122, one quarter mile west of the intersection of Route 122 and Route 122A.

Peter Cunningham discussed setting up a date to meet with DCR sometime after Aug. 1st to discuss the MBTA lease and the various approaches we are considering. We decided to send up to two representatives per town to avoid making this an official meeting, which would require transportation arrangements for the public. The Townsend committee decided to send Bill Rideout and Bill Martin, since both had expressed interest in attending. If one or both is not available on the date DCR chooses, we would try Steve Meehan, Ken Gerken, and Hirk Fortin, in that order. The Groton committee decided to let Peter Cunningham call members to try to arrange a second Groton member to go.

Bill Rideout discussed the preliminary contact he had had with the Iron Horse Preservation Society. The committee decided that the group sounded promising, and to ask Bill to pursue it further. Since the Iron Horse Preservation Society make money from the existing rails, we decided to ask DCR if the MBTA lease allow the signers of the lease to salvage the existing rails.

The Townsend minutes for June 3, 2010 were unanimously approved. The next meeting was scheduled for Aug 12, 2010 in Townsend. We agreed on the following preliminary agenda items: 1) the DCR meeting, 2) status of the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP), 3) the Iron Horse Preservation Society, 4) Stone dust trails and federal money, 5) Wachusett Greenways trail ride, 6) approving meeting minutes.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:24 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Bill Rideout
Secretary, Squannacook River Rail Trail Funding Exploration Committee