

Squannacook River Rail Trail Funding Exploration Committee

Minutes of Public Meeting of May 7, 2009 (Approved at June 11, 2009 meeting)

Location: Legion Hall, 75 Hollis Street, Groton

Time: 7 pm

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

Members Absent: Bill Martin

Attendees: Bruce Easom, Peter Cunningham, Kevin McKenzie (Groton committee), Mark Cram, Bill Wilkinson, Bruce Beauchesne (Townsend), Al Futterman (NRWA)

The meeting was brought to order at 7:11 pm. The first agenda item was the upcoming meeting with the Townsend Board of Selectmen scheduled for May 12, 2009. The purpose of this meeting will be to ask the Townsend BOS to approve sending a Project Need Form to MassHighway and the Montachusets Regional Planning Commission (MRPC). Bruce Easom suggested Patty, the Townsend MRPC representative, also attend the meeting. Steve Meehan agreed to follow up and find out her last name and contact her about the meeting.

We discussed whether we needed to wait until we presented a formal report before making this request. It was decided that since this step was necessary in order to determine whether funding was available, we did not need to wait until the final report was presented. Instead, we decided to give them a brief status report. Bill Rideout agreed to send Steve Meehan a one page powerpoint with some talking points.

We agreed that this meeting would have more chance of success with Peter Cunningham present. Since Peter could not make the May 12th meeting, we agreed to postpone until a later meeting, possibly on May 26th.

Next we discussed the upcoming federal highway reauthorization bill, scheduled for 2010. Al Futterman had been contacted by Olver's and Tsongas' offices about what he thought were high priority projects. The town of Groton was also contacted by Tsongas' office, and put Fitch's Bridge and the Squannacook River Rail Trail at the top of the list. Peter Cunningham said he would continue to follow up with Tsongas' office.

Bruce Easom spoke about his experiences at MRPC meetings. He said the style of this meeting is very informal, and the small number of attendees means that input is welcome. Bruce also discussed with Brad Harris of the MRPC a possible plan for doing the 100% design work for the rail trail. Olver's

office had told us that 2.5 million is left from the original 2005 earmark of 4 million. Earmark money can be put toward 80% of the design cost. Bruce said that if the design cost \$300,000, then the 20% earmark local cost would be \$60,000. If we could get a DCR grant to cover \$50,000, then only \$10,000 would need to be raised with local funding, a doable amount for fundraising. It was uncertain whether DCR would fund such a design study, but we agreed the it was worth discussing with DCR. Bruce agreed to write a one-page summary of his plan, and to contact Brad Harris and Olver's office for feedback.

We discussed the article in the Boston Globe (http://www.boston.com/lifestyle/green/articles/2009/04/14/80m_in_us_funds_for_bike_projects_unspent_in_mass/) about the state's failure to use federal funds for rail trails. The article quotes Colin Durrant of the Executive Office of Transportation as saying the state is overhauling the system. Peter Cunningham volunteered to contact her to see if our group could have a voice in that process.

The next meeting was scheduled for Thursday, June 11, 2009. The meeting was adjourned at 8:25 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Bill Rideout
Secretary, Squannacook River Rail Trail Funding Exploration Committee