

Squannacook River Rail Trail Funding Exploration Committee (Townsend)

Minutes of Public Meeting of Sep. 9, 2010 (approved Oct. 14, 2010)

Location: Town Hall, Groton, MA

Time: 7:00 pm

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

Members Absent: None

Attendees: Bruce Easom, Peter Cunningham, Russ Murray, Steve Legge (Groton committee), Al Futterman (NRWA), Mark Cram, Cheryl Rideout, Alfred Gadway, and Paul Concemi

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 pm. The first agenda item was a talk by Paul Concemi. Paul is a member of the Townsend Finance Committee, but he was speaking as a private citizen. Paul mentioned that the rail trail was a controversial issue in town. He said he had spoken with officials from Pepperell, who said the trail had had a positive effect on business in town, and that the town did not budget extra for policing the trail. Paul said that he personally liked rail trails, but he believed the finance committee would not support any requests for money to support the rail trail. Steve Meehan asked Paul if the Finance Committee looks only at the town budget's bottom line or does it consider impacts to businesses in town. Paul said, "Its black and white, they look at expenses to the town." He then said that the Finance Committee would talk to the business community to see if it would generate new income that would come to the town.

The next topic of discussion was follow-up on the meeting with the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). Peter Cunningham reported on his recent discussion with Conrad Crawford. He said that Conrad has said that DCR Commissioner Rick Sullivan was interested in our proposal and would like us to submit a written proposal. There was some discussion as to the level of detail our proposal should go into. It was decided just cover some basic points which the committee went over. The committee unanimously voted for Peter Cunningham and Bruce Easom to draft and send a written proposal to DCR covering those points.

We next discussed a document sent to Peter Cunningham by Tom LaRosa, legal council for DCR. It was an Interstate Commerce Commission report (Docket AB-32 sub 24) seemed to indicated that B&M had filed for abandonment (see attached document). Bruce Easom noted that he believed the document covered the rail bed from Townsend center to one mile south of Bertozzi, and therefore the whole length under consideration for a rail trail conversion. Peter said that Tom was still looking for the final decision in that case.

Bill Rideout discussed feedback from Ryan Hattrup of the Iron Horse Preservation Society. Ryan had walked the rail bed, and had noted there were a lot of trees that needed to be cut down. Ryan said that 95% of the rails can be reused, and that the ties were mostly scrap. He also said there is a lot of rock that would be useful.

Bill Martin brought up the issue of flooding in the area behind his home. He said the flooding was found in the area between his home and Harbor Church, and could be a problem with a stone dust trail.

Peter Cunningham said he had still not heard from Ann Sullivan at Mass Highway about whether they considered stone dust trail eligible for federal highway funding.

Future plans were discussed next. Bill Rideout mentioned that one possibility was the formation of a 501c3 non-profit to negotiate further with DCR. There was some discussion of interaction with open meeting laws should such a step be taken, and Bruce Easom said he would investigate that further. Steve Meehan volunteered to brief Townsend town administrator Andy Sheehan on recent happenings, and Bill Martin offered to go with him. There was a motion to appoint Steve Meehan and Bill Martin to brief Andy Sheehan on our committee's status, and it was passed unanimously.

The Townsend minutes for Aug. 12, 2010 were unanimously approved. The next meeting was scheduled for Oct, 14, 2010 in Townsend. The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Bill Rideout
Secretary, Squannacook River Rail Trail Funding Exploration Committee