

Squannacook River Rail Trail Funding Exploration Committee

Minutes of Public Meeting of Nov. 10, 2008 -Approved at meeting Nov. 20, 2008

Location: Kimball House, Highland Street, Townsend

Time: 7 pm

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

Members Absent: None

The meeting was brought to order at 7 pm. Since only Hirk Fortin has previously been on town boards, there was a discussion about how Open Meeting laws affect the committee. There was a discussion about the email announcing the meeting not reaching Bill Martin. Bill Rideout and Bill Martin will follow-up with a test email in the next few days.

It was decided the officers needed were a chairman to run the meeting and a secretary to write the minutes. A motion to elected Hirk Fortin as chairman was seconded and passed unanimously. A motion to elected Bill Rideout as secretary was seconded and passed unanimously.

Steve Meehan gave a brief background talk on various funding issues that had been investigated by the private Townsend rail trail committee. He discussed the earmark added by Congressman Olver's office, and the use of a large portion of that earmark by the North Central Rail Trail. Steve discussed the change in funding formulas from the earlier 80% federal and 20% state to the present formula of 80% federal, 10% state, and 10% town. Steve mentioned the general opinion in the rail trail community that this formula will lead to rail trails only being built in wealthier towns.

There was a general discussion of the goals of the committee. There was general agreement that a 10% town match was not something that could ever be raised in Townsend with town funds. Furthermore, raising that amount of money privately would be very challenging. So one of the main goals of the committee will be to see if that town match could be eliminated, either in the short term or in the long term. It was agreed that the main approach to this would be to talk with our federal and state representatives. It was also suggested we talk with the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission as a committee to learn the current trail funding and construction processes. Bill Martin noted he had read that the match formula depended on whether a rail trail is a "commuting" trail, and he said he would try to find where he had seen that.

Maintenance costs were also discussed. It was felt that one goal of this committee should be solid maintenance costs for the Nashua River Rail Trail, including both town and DCR contributions.

It was agreed that meeting together with the parallel Groton rail trail committee made sense, since the work could be divided up, and because working together makes the trail a regional one. It was noted that a planned date to meet with the Groton committee, Nov. 18, conflicted with Townsend's fall town meeting. It was agreed that Bill Rideout would try to work with both committees to find an alternate date.

In discussing meeting dates, it was agreed that Mondays and Fridays should be

avoided.

A motion to adjourn was seconded and passed unanimously at 7:42 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Bill Rideout

Secretary, Squannacook River Rail Trail Funding Exploration Committee