

Squannacook River Rail Trail Funding Exploration Committee

Minutes of Public Meeting of Nov. 20, 2008 – Approved at meeting Jan 14, 2009

Location: Memorial Hall, Room 1, Townsend

Time: 7 pm

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

Members Absent: None

Attendees: Mark Cram (Townsend) Peter Cunningham, Bruce Easom, Peter Carson, Steve Legge (Groton committee members)

The meeting was brought to order at 7:05 pm. This was a joint meeting with the Groton rail trail committee, which also was brought to order at 7:05 pm.

After introductions, the first topic was a review of the trail walk with Congresswoman Tsongas on Oct. 24, 2008. Peter Cunningham noted that Tsongas said that federal money was always 80% for this kind of project, with the other 20% from state or local government. She said that project that were intermodal were rated more highly, with intermodal meaning that the rail trail lead to a transportation hub such as a bus or trail station, and it was also higher rated if the trail were four season; that is, plowed in winter. The next federal highway is slated to be started in 2009. There was a discussion about whether the federal government or the state determines how the remaining 20% is funded; since there was no definite answer, we decided this was something we needed to investigate further. Steve Meehan noted that Congresswoman Tsongas stated that Congressman Olver was more experienced in transportation issues, given his chairmanship of the transportation committee. Congresswoman Tsongas aid Jane Adams would be here point person for this project, and Peter Cunningham has her contact information. We also discussed putting pictures of the walk on our website.

The next topic was outreach to Congressman Olver. Steve Meehan suggested that, with the possibility of an upcoming federal economic stimulus package, that the sooner the outreach occurred, the better. It was stated that projects that were ready to proceed would be the most likely ones funded by such a stimulus package. In order to be ready to proceed, a project would need to have the design work done, and be on the regional planning boards Transpiration Improvement Project (TIP). There was some discussion about whether the Squannacook River Rail Trail was already on the Montachusets Regional Planning Commission's TIP list. Bill Martin believed it was not, and Bill Rideout believed it was, but did not have explicit funding outside the four-trail earmark Olver had obtained in 2005. It was decided that further investigation was needed. Steve Meehan volunteered to work with Al Futterman to set up a meeting with

Congressman Olver's office. It was also decided to try to get a representative from Tsongas' office. It would be best if members from both Townsend and Groton attended, and all committee members would be encouraged to attend.

The next topic was outreach to state officials. Townsend and Groton both share a state representative (Robert Hargraves), but have different state senators. Groton has Steven C. Panagiotakos, who has been involved with the state report on rail trails, and is the chair of the senate Ways and Means committee. Townsend has Jen Flanagan, who is taking Antonioni's seat in January. Peter Cunningham volunteered to meet with Hargraves and Panagiotakos, and it was decided to wait to contact Flanagan until after she was sworn in.

The next topic was documenting maintenance costs. It was decided to send a single, standardized letter to all the towns involved with the Nashua River Rail Trail (Ayer, Groton, Pepperell, and Dunstable) and to DCR, requesting estimates of annual maintenance cost. The standardized letter should help in making sure all the organizations make cost estimates in a consistent way. Bruce Easom volunteered to write a draft version of this letter. The issue came up of whether it made sense to put such a letter on paper with a town letterhead. Bill Rideout offered to contact Greg Barnes to verify use of Town of Townsend letterhead was acceptable.

The next topic was the issue of a possible need to have B&M write a letter surrendering any freight rights. This is an issue Al Futterman has been pursuing, and it was decided to ask him to write a draft letter that each town's committee would send to B&M.

Bill Martin mentioned that he had seen information on the internet that the Wakefield rail trail committee had received a bid for \$46,000 for environmental liability insurance from AIG. Bill Rideout asked Bill Martin to forward him the link, since the cost of this insurance should also be documented in our committee's report.

The next meeting date was set for Jan. 14, 2009 at 7 pm in Groton town hall.

Respectfully submitted,

Bill Rideout
Secretary, Squannacook River Rail Trail Funding Exploration Committee