

Squannacook Greenways, Inc.

Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, February 10, 2021

Pete Carson, Mark Cram, Peter Cunningham, Bruce Easom, Bill Rideout, Joan Wotkowicz

Snowmobiles on trail

Recent postings on our Facebook page from Lunenburg snowmobilers pushed for opening the trail to sleds. Bill responded that the MBTA lease prohibits motorized use. Snowmobilers expressed an interest in contacting MBTA to request a change to the lease.

The postings did not receive many Likes and the social media traffic has quieted down, so we decided not to make any further statements for now. If the subject comes up again, we will continue to reference the MBTA lease. If necessary, Peter will reach out to our contact at the MBTA's realty firm.

Also, Pete and Joan followed snowmobile tracks to a house in Groton and Pete contacted Pat Huckery. If problems continue, we will contact the Environmental Police, especially if trespass occurs in Wildlife Management Areas.

Construction status

James Gates has been plowing the trail so the crew can continue work. They are still working on the piles of soil and will wait for the ground to warm before bringing in stone dust.

Bill submitted three of the four payments for our grant reimbursement. We have used \$108K out of the \$115K awarded.

Bill noted that the last payment to Gary is due when the entire first segment is finished. If weather prevents them from finishing the stone dust before March 15 and NHESP won't allow an extension, we may need to make a partial payment and resume construction in November.

Remaining tasks include the wetland replication, disposition of soil, application of stone dust, and construction of the parking lot. The parking lot is not within the NHESP designation, so it does not have to be done by March, but does have to be done by June 30 for the grant reimbursement.

Trail repairs where rails were removed

Pete noted that quite a few ties got kicked up during rail removal. We paid to have them moved out of the walking path, but we still will need a work day when the ground thaws to move a few remaining ties and fill in tire ruts.

Townsend grant application for Winter Shared Streets

Veronica Kell of the Townsend Select Board formed a working committee to apply for a state grant to improve streets and open spaces. Joan has been working with them to develop plans for signage to trails and parking lots, bike lanes, repainted cross-walks, and other improvements for walkability and bikeability.

The plan includes signs pointing to the rail trail from the center of town and from the public parking lots. Also included are a "You Are Here" map, bike rack, and bike repair station for the Depot Street parking lot.

Joan will ask if we can get a cross walk painted at Old Meetinghouse Road.

Groton CPA application

Bill said the Townsend Master Plan Committee intends to try again for CPA. Bruce suggested consulting with the Historical Commission. He noted that all nine towns that had CPA on their ballots last fall passed it.

Bruce said the Groton CPA Committee met on Monday and edited letters to applicants listng

things to improve on first drafts of applications. Peter said he is working on submitting additional information as requested. We still need estimates from Max13 and Gary Shepherd.

2021 MassTrails grant application

Joan reported that we submitted our online application on January 29 and received an acknowledgement. She heard that DCR received a record number of applications this year.

Libby Knott from DCR requested GIS shape files of the project. Bruce Easom created the files and Joan submitted them to Libby.

Permit for Grist Mill bridge repair

Joan submitted a new version of our request to amend the Orders of Conditions to Dave Henkels on January 18.

Steve Meehan Pedestrian Bridge

The bridge proposed by a Townsend resident who wished to remain anonymous will connect the rail trail to Timberlee Park over a dirt road.

Stan Dillis did the delineation in November and is ready to make a presentation to the Townsend Select Board. The project will likely have the same Natural Heritage restrictions as the rail trail, potentially being constructed in fall of 2022.

The bridge will not use the existing foundations, but will be longer and higher, spanning over the original foundations.

Bruce reminded us we can work in the summer if we hire a turtle watch. This might be useful option especially in a limited work area, such as the pedestrian bridge.

Speeders

Kim Craven told Bill about a group that wants to run railway motor cars on the tracks north of Dudley Road. This section is not in our lease, but Bill is trying to find out who the group is so he can direct them to request MBTA permission.

Financial report / MassTrails reimbursements

Bill reported that we have \$7K left in the MassTrails grant, which must be paid out before June. We will have ~ \$45K left in the bank after this construction season.

Events/publicity/fundraising

April 24 is Earth Day and also the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy's Celebrate Trails Day, but may not be able to host any activities due to the virus.

Review minutes

A motion to approve the minutes from our meeting on January 13, 2021 was seconded and approved unanimously.

Next Meeting

Squannacook Greenways will hold our next rail trail meeting on **Wednesday, March 10, 2021** at 7:00 P.M. via Zoom.

Respectfully submitted,

Joan Wotkowicz, Clerk

Squannacook Greenways, Inc.