

Topsfield Rail Trail Committee

Meeting Minutes

Monday, April 23, 2007

Present: Joe Geller, Gregg Demers, Kathy Tremblay, Dave Anderson and Dave Read

The meeting started at 7:30 pm and ended at 9:35 pm

1. *Friends of Topsfield Trails:* Funds can not be raised though our official town appointed committee so we have decided to set up a 'Friends of Topsfield Trails Committee' organization. FTT will be set up as a legal not-for-profit 501c3 organization. The rail trail committee elected the following FTRT officers:

President: Gregg Demers

Treasurer: Joe Geller

Secretary: Dave Anderson

Special Projects Coordinators: Dave Read and Kathy Tremblay

2. *Response letter to Jim Callahan's letter and petition:* The town's Selectmen asked the Rail Trail Committee to develop a formal response to Mr. Callahan's letter to the Selectman. It was decided that a letter addressing his concerns and to correct some misinformation would be sent to Mr. Callahan and each of the residents who signed the petition. A letter will also be sent to the Village Reporter to respond to Mrs. Callahan's letter with detailed responses to her two main concerns: motorized vehicles and child safety. Gregg agreed to work on a draft of these letters.
3. *Additional information for the web site in reference to the above:* The committee also decided to include more information on our web site that addresses these concerns with links to additional pertinent sites if needed. Joe will update the site.
4. *Update on Dept. of Transportation Task Force to build the B2B trail:* Dave Read attended the monthly meeting held on April 18th at the Mass Highway offices in State Transportation Building in Boston on the Boarder to Boston (B2B) Trail. Representatives from most of the 8 towns attended with members of MassBike, the Essex National Heritage Organization, National Grid and several representatives from Mass Highway:
 - Deputy Director for Transportation Dave Anderson (no relation to our Dave Anderson) and Kevin Walsh from the state opened the discussion by announcing that they had positive response from MEPA for the entire Border to Boston Trail.
 - Next they introduced Shawn Holland, the state's project manager assigned to the B2B project. Shawn has experience helping bring other trails to fruition.
 - Sharon Larson of National Grid will be setting up a Right of Way meeting with Federal Highway in May. Federal Highway will have to approve how the acquisition of the land took place. They prefer

leases as opposed to licenses for abandoned rail corridors. (Topsfield has a lease with the MBTA)

- Steve Golden of the National Park Service announced that a new segment of rail line has been abandoned from Danvers (terminus of B2B) thru Lynnfield to Wakefield. This news was received positively by all but there was discussion about if the \$800k earmarked by Congressman Tierney's office would be eligible if this portion of the project if it was decided to add this next 10 miles to the B2B initiative. The earmark of funds specifically states that it is for the Danvers to Salisbury section. There was a lot of discussion about the project not biting off too much or losing focus on what we have within our grasp. The group agreed to continue discussing this issue at upcoming meetings. Steve is concerned that the \$800k earmark needs to be spent within the lifetime of SAFETEA-LU. He stated that based on precedent from other projects, it's unlikely we'll be able to get any more money until we spend the total amount. Shawn will also follow-up how this relates to the matching funds needed.
 - Bridge crossings: It was estimated that the two bridge crossings over the route 95 interstate would probably cost \$3M each and that an on-road route would be developed in Boxford and Newbury until there was funding for these in the future. All other bridges currently on the trail will need to be designed to support emergency vehicles.
 - The group next started discussing development of a document with specific guidelines for the trail's design criteria. Shawn Holland would start to work on what will be needed for this including the width of the trail, the distance of the trail from the National Grid poles, if the surface will be paved or non-paved, and the environmental impact. There was discussion about if the design criteria could include recommendations that the surfaces be different depending upon town preference. It was reiterated that to receive any funding the trail must meet ADA (federal) and AAB (state) regulations.
 - Dave Anderson stated that a scope of work would be discussed at the May meeting. Several trail projects in progress were discussed and it was agreed that the B2B project was more like the Bruce Freeman Trail project than the Black Stone River Valley Trail project as the latter was mostly put together with state land acquisitions.
 - Shawn Holland and Bill Steelman will discuss putting one or two subgroups to help get all the work done.
 - The next meeting will be held on May 16th from 10:30 to 12:00 in the Transportation Building.
5. *Upcoming Fall B2B Middle to End Event:* On Sunday, October 21st the eight communities that will be initially part of the Boston to Boarder trail in conjunction with the Essex National Heritage Organization, will hold an inaugural event where people can walk or ride the trail from the town they live in to Camp Dennison in Georgetown, which is approximately the middle of the entire 28 mile trail. More details will be forthcoming as they become available,

6. *Topsfield clean-up day Saturday April 28:* Joe Geller will be organizing a clean up day for the rail trail between Main and Washington Streets. For those available you can meet Joe at 8:30. This coincides with the town wide Topsfield Clean-up Day activities.
7. *Next steps for Topsfield Depot Station Project:* Brian Woodland will present his proposal to the Zoning Board of Appeals on Tuesday April 24 at 7:30 pm. If possible please attend to show our support of his project.
8. *DOT Project Need Form:* Gregg Demers agreed to review it to confirm it's accuracy with regards to the Topsfield section before being submitted to the Massachusetts Department of Transportation.

The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, May 8th, 2007 at 7:30 in the town hall.

Respectfully submitted,

David Read