



Town of Topsfield

TOPSFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

Rail Trail Committee

Minutes of Committee Meeting August 31, 2009 – 8:00 PM

Members Present: Joe Geller (chair), Dave Read, Gregg Demers, Roy Baessler, Kathy Tremblay and Katherine Carlson

Guests: Selectman Dick Gandt and Joan Panella

1. **Old Business:** Minutes from the May 25, 2009 meeting were unanimously approved with minor revisions.
2. **Ribbon Cutting Ceremony:** The date opening ceremonies for Phase 1 for the trail has been set for Saturday, October 17th at 1 pm. There will also be a photo exhibit at the library that day as well as trail walks in the morning (Open Space Committee organized). There was discussion of whether to start the ceremony at the library or the trail and it was decided to start at the library. The to-do list to get ready for the event is as follows:
 - a. Invitation: Dave will work with graphic designer Beth Johnson to develop an invite to send out.
 - b. Ribbon: Kathy will get a wide ribbon inscribed with ‘Topsfield Linear Common’. Joe to bring large scissors.
 - c. Refreshments: Joan will plan for refreshments.
 - d. Mailing: We will meet again at the end of September to go over last minute details and address envelopes for the invitations.
 - e. Pre-event trail maintenance: Roy will organize a mowing prior to the Topsfield Fair and ribbon cutting event.
3. **Section C completion:** Roy said that K&R Construction will be completing the last section of Phase 1 of the trail by the second week of September.
4. **Signage:** Gregg and Dave placed posts in the ground for six STOP signs ordered for the trail which should be installed within two weeks. The group discussed what other signs may be needed such as “Please pick up after your animal (dog/horse)”.
5. **Stone dust erosion:** A short section of trail near the playground has slightly washed out after heavy rains so this needs to be addressed.. K&R will give us a proposal for fixing that small section.
6. **Rail Stop location:** The Selectmen approved the south side of Main St. to locate this historic icon of railroad history.

7. **Screening:** Selectman Martha Morrison has been working with landscape architect Dan Peabody to identify plants and trees on Town property that could be transferred and replanted for screening for some of the abutter's property. Katherine Carlson will assist.
8. **Phase 2 design:** A preliminary design has been completed for Phase 2 of the trail. A public forum will be held at the library on Thursday, October 22nd to get comments on this section. The event will be held in conjunction with a planned speaker, Richard Symmes of the Beverly Historical Society, on the history of the rail road in Topsfield.
9. **Conservations Commission permitting:** A Notice of Intent (NOI) application will need to be completed for Phase 2 and Gregg agreed to start work on that. Rather than do each section separate the group discussed submitting documentation for the whole trail from the Wenham line to the Boxford line. Abutter notification will be done by placing a notice in the newspaper. Phase 2 abutters will be notified about the forum by notice placed at the houses.
10. **Rail Removal:** Joe has been in touch with 3 organizations about taking the remaining rails up along the route.
 - a. Trolley Museum of Kennebunk, ME
 - b. Northern Rail Systems of Agawam, MA
 - c. Iron Horse Preservation Society of Reno, NV.
11. **Fairgrounds dirt and gravel piles:** The Selectman will be speaking with the Essex Agricultural Society about the dirt and gravel piles.
12. **Route 1 crossing:** This section of roadway is under the jurisdiction of the state (as opposed to Route 97 which is controlled by the town). We'll need to get on the MPO and then the TIP (Transportation Improvement Plan). Some towns are using the 'Cross Alert' system for trail crossing and these systems are approved by Mass Highway. More details on that will be provided at future meetings. We are seeking a proposal from a certified traffic engineer for a study, plan and to complete the Mass Highway application.
13. **Knotweed eradication:** Since we have missed the ideal window for the most effective treatment we will wait until the first two weeks of August next year (2010). The trail may already fall under the existing Town's Operational Plan which is approved by the State Dept. of Agriculture.
14. **DCR Grant update:** We may be eligible for up to \$41,000 in grants from the Mass Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) for unspent money from prior years. Gregg is also working on the DCR 2009 grant application which is due Oct. 1.
15. **Topsfield Circuit Race:** This local bike race is planned for September 12th and there will also be a kid's race at 11 AM at Wheatland Field.
16. **Topsfield Fair Planning:** We will continue our tradition of setting up a table on the first night, Oct. 2, (Topsfield night) at the Fair. Kathy and Joe will do set up. Dave and Joe will do clean-up. Please let Joe know if you can work a shift at our booth.
17. **Newburyport Bike/Ped bridge:** On a recent Thursday night Joe went up to Newburyport to watch construction crews lower in place a bike/pedestrian bridge over Low Street which connects sections of their trail. Traffic was rerouted as the 80 foot bridge arrived at 10:30 PM and was bolted into place. The Clipper City Trail is part of the Border to Boston project that will eventually connect to Topsfield.
18. **National Grid Lease/License:** We are working with the other B2B towns (Boxford, Georgetown and Newbury) and engaged the law firm Kopelman and Page to first draw up a license, then a lease, for the right of way with National Grid. NG has developed a

similar license with the Town of Easton and a lease with the Town of Milford in Massachusetts so they are using those as a starting point. As a result the cost for the license work will be moderate at \$5,000 in total or \$1,250 per town which, for Topsfield, will be paid by the Friends of the Topsfield Trail.

19. **Other B2B related updates:** Dave relayed that construction is also progressing on the Old Marsh Trail in Salisbury. Danvers has set up a Rail Trail Advisory Committee that reports the Town's elected officials like Topsfield. Dave and Joe have been invited to give a talk to the Hamilton/Wenham Rotary Club on September 11th in an effort to help get their trail effort going in Wenham.
20. **Spillway decking:** The date of Saturday, September 19th has been set to redeck the Ipswich River Spillway. The construction volunteers include Roy, Dave, Joe, Dan Philpot and Bruce Davidson. Much of the lumber needed will come from the recycled pressure treated stock from a deck donated by a Topsfield resident.
21. **New England Grassroots Environmental Fund Grant:** Our grant application was accepted and we just received a check for \$1,250 for future Ipswich River Bridge work.
22. **Ipswich River Bridge redecking plans:** Hancock Engineering and a couple of other firms will be contacted to complete an inspection of the Ipswich River bridge before it is redecked. The Essex County Trails Association may also contribute to the financial cost of redecking the bridge.

Meeting adjourned at 10:45 PM

Respectfully submitted, Dave Read