



Town of Topsfield

TOPSFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

Rail Trail Committee

Minutes of Committee Meeting September 29, 2008 8:00 PM

Members Present: Joe Geller, Dave Read, Gregg Demers, Roy Baessler, Katherine Carlson
Guests: Dick Gant

Old Business

The minutes from September 11, 2008 meeting were approved unanimously.

New Business

1. **Topsfield Night at Fair:** Kathy Tremblay has reserved space for a Rail Trail Committee booth for the first night of the Fair and she will work on a putting together a nice fall display. As at past year's fairs we'll sell t-shirts and have brochures about the trail available for all Topsfield residents who stop by. The group discussed the coverage schedule for the booth.
2. **Trail Maintenance:** The mowing volunteer group has been cutting their sections of trail to get ready for the Topsfield Fair. Dave and Roy will attempt to tackle one last section before Friday's Fair opening.
3. **2007 DCR Grant Award:** Joe announced that the Topsfield Rail Trail Committee received a \$62,500 grant from the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation. This is a \$50,000 cash grant with \$12,500 of in-kind matching funds needed. We were awarded the maximum amount of the grant and one of the few rail trail projects in our area to receive one of the grants this year. Thanks to Greg for all the effort he put into writing the grant.
4. **Public Safety Committee Review of Trail:** Police Chief Hagland and Dave Bond of the Highway Department reviewed the proposed layout of the trail by Topsfield Station. They recommend pushing the trail a little further from the building or installing 'STOP' and "Walk Bikes" signs for cyclists to dismount as they pass by a possibly busy retail area.
5. **Topsfield Station (7 Grove St.) Design Subcommittee:** Joe and Roy have been representing the Rail Trail Committee on this subcommittee and reported progress that the Selectmen and Brian Woodland have agreed the location of the easement of the trail. The easement on the National Grid section of trail will be 20 feet wide and the trail will

- be a different surface than the sidewalk outside the shop to clearly delineate the trail and direct users away from the building.
6. **Legal Review of National Grid Property:** Until we title examinations of the railroad ownership of properties north of Washington St., as Boxford and Georgetown have, we should not expect much progress with National Grid.. Joe met with Marsha Blyth-Brown, a Boxford resident and lawyer who previously worked for the rail road holding company. She prepared a title search package that will be sent out to three law firms for bids to perform the title searches for the Town of Topsfield. The committee voted unanimously in favor of starting the title examinations on the National Grid portion of the trail with the use of received grants.
 7. **Border to Boston Trail update:** Mass Highway has selected the engineering firm of Fay, Spofford and Thorndike to perform the 25% design of the Border to Boston Trail. Since several of the towns are doing title searches with grant funding that should lessen some aspects of the scope of work for the entire project and keep the price that much lower for Mass Highway. Newburyport did not want to wait for the Mass Highway to build the trail so they started construction of their portion of the B2B earlier this past summer.
 8. **Non-governmental grants:** Based on web searches of where other trails receive their funding there are many foundations and philanthropic organizes who focus on environmental causes and fund development of trails. Katherine agreed to look into some of these grants and will report back at a future meeting.
 9. **1A Construction Timeline:** Roy presented timeline for phase 1A including all the tasks that the committee could identify that need to get done to get trail on the ground and allow for the grants to be utilized to the fullest before any expire. The schedule takes us through June 1st, 2009 when all of the expiring grant funds would be expended.
 10. **Trail signs:** Roy presented the “TRTC No Motorized Vehicle Signs” that the Selectmen had approved. The group reviewed the locations where they would be needed in to help ensure that all trail users know that motorized vehicles are prohibited from the trail. Roy will ask Roberta to order 20 signs using the grant funds.
 11. **MBTA Work Application:** Rather than ask the MBTA to approve just redecking the bridges and culverts over the Ipswich River we should ask them to approve work on the whole trail rather than asking to approve components of the plan from time to time.
 12. **Website Update:** Katherine and Joe will work on enhancements to the website. The group agreed we need better “Contact Us” information on the site. The Friends of the Topsfield Rail Trail may also set up a separate site.
 13. **Volunteer Tracking Sheet:** Greg and Dave discussed an example of the hours and expense tracking sheet and empathized that all committee members need to keep track of the hours and fund they spend working on the trail. Dave showed an example of his time and personal funds spent on the trail. He will email the template created. Please send all completed sheets to Greg and he will submit them to the Essex Heritage and DCR so we can be in compliance to get credit for the matching funds.
 14. **Cons-Com NOI:** The Conservation Commission approved our Notice of Intent and said the erosion of the trail surface should not propose a problem. They also approved moving Mike DiMario’s trees to give them more privacy when the trail goes in.

Meeting adjourned: 11:00 PM

Respectfully submitted: Dave Read