

especial-
chief's
gentle, we had to give her pills
over the years. She was always
good about it," the chief said.

Smokey, the Boxford Police mascot.

photo, courtesy of Boxford P.D.

Group questions 'rail trail' plans, costs

by Faye Baynard

Claiming that Topsfield is not building a rail trail for local residents but has an expansive trail to serve the Boston to Salisbury Beach corridor, members of the Topsfield grassroots committee is seeking more information on that effort.

"This is not some idyllic local path," says the Coalition for Neighborhood Information (CNI), the newly formed group that is raising questions about cost and opening up the town to outsiders. CNI spokesman Robert Morgan asked the selectmen last week to keep all residents informed of the issues. A couple of dozen townspeople attended the Oct. 29 meeting to hear Morgan's presentation on the proposed rail trail. The 20 Washington Street resident was provided a 45-minute agenda time slot to outline the groups' concerns.

"Have a high level design and cost estimates for the whole trail, before starting any of the phases," Morgan stressed. Challenges lie in planning and costs including the rail trail crossing of route 97, route 1, Main Street downtown, parking, wetland protec-

tion, and safety for bikers, pedestrians and horses, he added.

The selectmen stressed repeatedly that they are opposed to spending any local tax revenue to build the trail.

Morgan's presentation cited other bike trails in communities where costs include policing, trash pickup and security. Who will provide for maintenance costs, once the proposed trail is in place? he wondered. In addition, the spokesman challenged the makeup of the Topsfield Rail Trail members, with one being equestrian advocate and chairman Joe Geller, who also serves on three other committees including Open Space, Recreation and Master Plan Committee. Morgan stressed "gives an appearance of impropriety".

Linear Common

"This is a component of a major bicycle pathway from Boston to New Hampshire border in Salisbury," said the CNI advocate. Morgan suggested that the development of this trail "could be a state effort to boost tourism, in contradiction to our own desire to keep our rural character".

Morgan argued that "this is

like calling a road project Parsonage Lane and actually building route 1 instead.

Morgan's documentation demanded that the town produce costs that could be incurred locally. He also called for changes in the Rail Trail Committee membership and "to work with as many landowners as possible." In addition the CNI group wants a town meeting vote, where discussion can occur on the merit of the proposed trail.

Safety with horses, pedestrians and bicycles on the same trail was of concern as was the decreased privacy, and opportunities for crime and vandalism. CNI believes that motorcycles and ATVs will require more police vigilance to keep them off the trail.

The document submitted by CNI pictured litter, trash and graffiti on the Marblehead trail, and cited instances of injuries, environmental concerns and decreasing property values as something that has occurred in other communities where bicycle trails are built.

The group concluded that the Rail Trail question should be the subject of a town meeting article and a ballot vote in Topsfield.

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