

Squannacook Greenways, Inc.

Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, December 1, 2021

Attending:

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

MassDOT Moving Together conference

MassDOT will host the annual Moving Together conference virtually on December 7-9, 2021. Registration is \$50.

Amanda Lewis asked us to participate as panelists on a session about successful projects funded through MassTrails. Bill prepared a 15-minute presentation on rail trail construction. The other panelists will be New Bedford (feasibility study) and Pittsfield (design).

Options for funding and construction

Peter reported that the Massachusetts House and Senate reached an agreement on the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), but we don't yet know if our funding made it to the final bill. Our construction plan will depend on when we will receive the money and how long we have to spend it.

Bill developed a contingency plan in which we agree to pay Shepco \$60,000 to start removing ties on the section from Old Meetinghouse Road and Harbor Church. If the ARPA funding comes through, we will pay an additional \$80,000 for full construction of the 0.7 mile section.

Should the ARPA money come early enough, Shepco will try to complete the section by spring 2022. If not, they will finish in the next build season, starting in November 2022.

If we do not receive at least \$80,000 from ARPA, Shepco will stop work after \$60,000 has been spent.

The Groton section will have to wait until the following year. Bruce asked about hiring a

wildlife biologist so we can keep our momentum going by working during turtle migration season. Peter will check if our approval letter allows for this. He will confer with Dave Paulson if needed.

Budget Scenarios

Bill developed two scenarios:

The "hopeful" plan assumes \$200K from ARPA and additional funding for the final phase, allowing us to finish all sections by spring of 2023.

The "pessimistic" scenario assumes no ARPA money and MassTrails grants limited to \$100K. In this scenario, we won't finish until spring of 2026.

Plan for MassTrails grant application

The grant cycle is now open and applications are due by February 1. We expect to apply, but the details of our request will depend on the outcome of the ARPA funding.

MassTrails announced two additional funding opportunities: a Land and Water Conservation Fund and funding for Open Space, Trails, and Active Transportation. Joan will attend the information sessions.

Steve Meehan Bridge

Stan is working on changes requested by Dave Paulson and will submit a revised NHESP application. He will then ask to reopen the Townsend Conservation Commission hearing.

Ongoing maintenance

Bill and Dave Chenelle leaf-blowed from Old Meetinghouse Road to Sterilite. We may need to clear leaves from the drainage troughs in spring and bring in stone dust over the culverts.

Joan pointed out that the trash barrel at Depot Street is full again. Bill said that Gary planned to remove them at the end of November. Joan would like to add a sign on the barrel saying "Barrel is maintained by VOLUNTEERS. Please help by taking all trash home. CARRY IN - CARRY OUT"

Joan removed our original DEP signs, which were worn out. She will make replacement signs for Old Meetinghouse Road and Harbor Pond and post the Orders of Conditions.

She posted a small sign at the Depot Street trailhead reminding trail users to stay safe during hunting season by staying on the trail and wearing orange.

Other events/publicity/outreach

Joan left a message with Jessica Consalvo, Townsend's Conservation Agent, requesting a meeting.

Financial report

We have \$63K, including a generous donation from Bill. We will most likely spend the full amount to remove ties from Old Meetinghouse Road and Harbor Church.

Review minutes

Motions to approve the minutes from our meetings on October 20 and November 10, 2021 were seconded and approved unanimously.

Next Meeting

Squannacook Greenways will hold our next rail trail meeting on **Wednesday, December 15** at 7:00 P.M. via Zoom.

Respectfully submitted,

Joan Wotkowicz, Clerk

Squannacook Greenways, Inc.