

Squannacook River Rail Trail Funding Exploration Committee (Townsend)

Minutes of Public Meeting of Aug 12, 2010 (Approved Sep. 9, 2010)

Location: Memorial Hall, Townsend, MA

Time: 7:00 pm

Members Present: Steve Meehan (Chairman), Bill Rideout (Secretary), Hirk Fortin, Ken Gerken

Members Absent: Bill Martin

Attendees: Bruce Easom, Peter Cunningham, Russ Murray, Steve Legge (Groton committee), Al Futterman (NRWA), Mark Cram, Cheryl Rideout, and Ryan Hatstrup (Iron Horse Preservation Society).

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm. The first agenda item was a discussion of the Aug 3, 2010 meeting with members of the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). At the meeting were Tom LaRosa, Deputy General Counsel, Conrad Crawford, Peter Cunningham, Bruce Easom, Al Futterman, and Bill Rideout. Peter had opened the meeting with a discussion of our vision of working with DCR based on the model of the Wachusett Greenways. Peter described how Wachusett Greenways operated a stone dust trail on DCR land based on a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between DCR and Wachusett Greenways. Tom LaRosa had not heard of this agreement before, so we gave him a copy. Tom noted that the lawyer that had written this MOA (Joe McGinn) worked for the water side of DCR. Tom noted that as legal counsel, it was not his job to decide whether or not to enter into a lease agreement, instead, his role was to get leases signed his boss asked him to sign. Conrad said that he would like to talk to Rick Sullivan, the commissioner of DCR, about this idea. We also discussed environmental liability with DCR. Tom said that the state was self-insured - the state was not allowed to buy insurance of any type. Conrad said he would get back to us with feedback from Rick Sullivan.

General thoughts about the DCR meeting were discussed next. Bill Rideout said that he felt an important aspect of any future negotiation with DCR would be the credibility of the organization with whom DCR would sign the MOA. That is, it would be necessary to convince DCR that the organization would maintain the trail far into the future. Bruce Easom suggested that our committees write up a proposal to DCR for how this agreement might work. There was a discussion of whether our committees were the appropriate ones to write such a proposal, since we would not be the organization involved with the final negotiations, as least given our present charter. This was followed by a discussion of the overall future of our committees. The options considered were presenting a final report to the towns and then dissolving to form a 501(c)(3), or going to the Board of Selectmen and asking for a change in our charter. It was decided we needed to think more

about this, and it would be discussed at the next meeting.

The next agenda item was the Iron Horse Preservation Society (<http://www.ironhorsepreservation.org>). Ryan Hattrup from that group was present. After giving him a brief overview of our trail, Ryan talked to us about his organization. He said they had started out west reclaiming tracks on military bases. He said they had learned to be very efficient removing tracks and ties and associated hardware, and had learned how to maximize resale of usable tracks and ties. He discussed their on-going work in Topsfield, Everett, Danvers, and Watertown. He discussed how each rail bed they worked on was different in a number of ways: 1) the percentage of rails that could be reused rather than sold as scrap, 2) the percentage of ties that could be sold for landscaping rather than being shipped for disposal, 3) the amount of tree removal, etc. The amount of finish work that could be done on any given rail trail depended on those conditions. Ryan noted that all the trails they were working on were MBTA lines where the towns had signed the MBTA lease. He handed out example contracts between Iron Horse and the town from Danvers and Wenham (attached). Finally, he agreed to walk our trail the next day to give us feedback on it.

Peter Cunningham mentioned that he planned to talk with Ann Sullivan of MassHighway about whether MassHighway would now consider building stone dust trails with federal money. We agreed to put that on the agenda for next meeting.

The July 28, 2010 ride of the with Wachusett Greenways member Ed Yaglou was discussed next. Steve Meehan noted that the trail was rougher than the paved Bruce Freeman trail, yet it was easily manageable with a street bike. Steve mentioned a number of places where there were unfenced drops. He said Ed said they maintained the trail with little or no DCR support. He also noted the use of naming rights on benches for fundraising, and that he saw many opportunities for Eagle Scout projects.

The Townsend minutes for July 8, 2010 were unanimously approved. The next meeting was scheduled for Sep 9, 2010 in Groton. The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Bill Rideout  
Secretary, Squannacook River Rail Trail Funding Exploration Committee