

November 2012
Squannacook Greenways Newsletter



Built and maintained by Squannacook Greenways, Inc.

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With your help, Townsend and Groton write DCR strong letters of support for Squannacook Greenways!

The week of October 23, 2012 was a significant one for Squannacook Greenways efforts to build the Squannacook River Rail Trail. That week both the towns of Townsend and Groton sent the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) strong letters of support for our efforts.

Even though Squannacook Greenways will be solely responsible for building and maintaining the Squannacook River Rail Trail, DCR is playing a critical role in making this trail a reality. DCR has agreed to sign the MBTA lease for the rail bed, and then sign a memorandum of agreement with Squannacook Greenways. This agreement would turn over all responsibility for building and maintaining the Squannacook River Rail Trail to our non-profit.

One of the conditions DCR placed on this agreement was that both towns agree to provide support in one way or another. In Townsend, this support was to push for a construction of a small section of sidewalk in the Townsend Harbor area, and that the public safety agencies provide reactive response.

On Oct. 23, the Townsend Board of Selectmen took up the issue of this letter of support, and in addition, invited members of the public to give their opinions on the rail trail. We all at Squannacook Greenways are deeply grateful for the strong showing of support we got at this meeting. In the end the Townsend Board of Selectmen voted 2-1 to write the letter of support. We understand that proposed rail trails are often emotional issues, and we would also like to thank the board and Town Administrator Andy Sheehan for handling this meeting in a thoughtful and professional manner.

In response to the Townsend letter, Groton also wrote DCR a strong letter of support, and both the [Townsend](#) and [Groton](#) letters are on our website.

Getting these letters of support was a critical step for our rail trail. We can now move forward to finalizing our negotiations with DCR, and move on with the building of this rail trail, as described in the next article. On a personal note, the support expressed for the rail trail at the Townsend meeting made us look forward even more to the day this trail opens!

What are the next steps?

In the next few months, our goal is to come to a final, detailed agreement with DCR. This agreement will spell out any steps we will still need to take before the actual lease is signed. One such step we have already agreed on is our purchasing environmental insurance, which will involve fundraising or grant writing on our part.

Once the agreement with DCR is in place, our group will move forward with two main goals - 1) funding our rail trail, and 2) completing the design and permitting stage. To fund our trail, we will be writing grants and doing fundraising. We will also have a membership drive.

Design and permitting will be another large undertaking. Permits are required at both the town and state level. Engineering design will be required at parking lots, where the trail transitions to a sidewalk, and in certain environmentally sensitive locations. The design phase will also include offers to meet with abutters to discuss individual concerns.

Throughout this process of moving toward the day the trail opens, there will be many opportunities for you to help make this trail a reality. Stay tuned to this email, our website at www.SqGw.org, or our facebook page for more updates in the near future!