

Squannacook River Rail Trail Funding Exploration Committee (Townsend)

Minutes of Public Meeting of Oct 14, 2010 (approved Nov. 18, 2010)

Location: Town Hall, Groton, MA

Time: 7:00 pm

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

Members Absent: Hirk Fortin

Attendees: Peter Cunningham, Russ Murray (Groton committee), Al Futterman (NRWA), Mark Cram

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 pm. The first agenda item was a Bill Martin's suggestion of a possible discussion of the project with the Townsend Conservation Commission (TCC). Bill Rideout pointed out it would need to be a very preliminary discussion since the trail was not yet at the design phase. We agreed it would be good to hear the TCC's general concerns. Al Futterman agreed to send them an electronic copy of the FST report. It was also agreed that since this was not a financial issue, the committee did not need to vote on who would go. Steve Meehan and Bill Rideout volunteer to offer to speak with the TCC, and Bill Rideout said he would contact them.

Peter Cunningham next discussed the letter of support sent by State Senator Flannagan to the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) (attached). It was felt that sending Senator Flannagan a copy of the proposal we are sending to DCR would be a good idea, so that she would more fully understand our proposed relationship with DCR.

Peter Cunningham said that the proposal to DCR had not yet been sent, but that he hoped he and Bruce Easom would be able to send it the next day. Peter is going to send it to Conrad Crawford first for any possible revisions before it goes to Commissioner Sullivan.

We next discussed the freight right issue. Al Futterman mentioned two conversations he had had since the last meeting. The first was with Bob LaVita of Transit Reality. Al had sent Bob a copy of the final ruling on the abandonment of freight rights that Tom LaRosa from DCR had dug out (attached). Tom had described finding this document as like "finding a needle in a haystack". Al said the Bob LaVita had told him that this document definitely stated that B&M had abandoned its freight rights over the entire section of our proposed trail. Al also sent a copy of the final ruling to Pan Am. Al said Darlene Ligor at Pan Am did not believe that this document definitely ended their claim to freight rights, and that Pan Am wanted us to send them money so Pan Am could investigate further. Bill Rideout noted that Pan Am's opinion was irrelevant in this matter, because it would be Bob LaVita from Transit Reality who would sign the lease. There was agreement that no further interaction with Pan Am was required in this matter.

Steve Meehan reported on his discussion with Townsend town administrator Andy Sheehan. At our previous meeting, Steve and Bill Martin had been authorized to brief Andy on our committee's actions. Steve said that Andy declined a meeting at this time, and so Steve just gave him a brief verbal review.

We next discussed Ken Gerken's resignation. The committee noted Ken's many contributions and expressed the wish that he continue to work with us. A motion was made and passed unanimously to

send Andy Sheehan an email supporting Mark Cram as Ken's replacement. Steve Meehan offered to send that email.

Bill Rideout discussed the Moving Together Conference that was held in Boston on Oct 13, 2010. He said that the focus of the conference was on the reorganized Massachusetts Department of Transportation. Their message was the this new organization was working harder to balance automobile needs with those of bicyclists and pedestrians. No one from the Department of Conservation and Recreation was there.

Peter Cunningham discussed his conversion with Ann Sullivan of MassHighway. Ann said that stone dust surfaces were now considered eligible for federal funds. Al Futterman offered to contact Olver's office to see if any money from the earmark could be put toward a stone dust trail.

Bill Rideout brought up the topic of the alternate route in the Townsend Harbor area. He said that he had discussed as a private citizen the possibility of a sidewalk on the south side of Route 119 between Shepherd's and Harbor Church with Andy Sheehan. Andy had said that the Board of Selectmen had asked him to investigate the issue of a possible sidewalk along Route 119. Andy said that he would ask the engineering firm VHB to give a preliminary opinion on the alternative route option. The committee unanimously passed a motion asking Bill Rideout to send Andy an email voicing the committee's support for town's pursuing this alternative route.

The Townsend minutes for Sep 9, 2010 were unanimously approved after being amended. The next meeting was scheduled for Nov. 18, 2010 in Groton. The meeting was adjourned at 8:35 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Bill Rideout  
Secretary, Squannacook River Rail Trail Funding Exploration Committee