Squannacook Greenways is proud to announce that we have been awarded a $18,000 grant from the Community Foundation of North Central Massachusetts to kickstart a fundraising drive for the construction of the Squannacook River Rail Trail.

Squannacook Greenways is a local non-profit organization that was formed in 2012 with the goal of creating a rail trail along the Squannacook River. The Squannacook River Rail Trail will be a 3.7 mile stone dust rail trail on the existing MBTA rail bed, with a western end in Townsend center. It will travel east just south of Route 119, passing behind the Harbor Village Shopping Center, where it will parallel Townsend Road in Groton until it reaches the Bertozzi Wildlife area.

Unlike other rail trails in Massachusetts, the Squannacook River Rail Trail is not being built by a town or the state. The trail is instead being built by our local non-profit, Squannacook Greenways. All the money needed to build this trail will be raised by Squannacook Greenways. The planned Squannacook River Rail Trail will be a 3.7 mile stone dust rail trail on the existing MBTA rail bed. It will travel east just south of Route 119, passing behind the Harbor Village Shopping Center, where it will parallel Townsend Road in Groton until it reaches the Bertozzi Wildlife area.

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The new off-road ambulance

The direct grant from the Community Foundation of North Central Massachusetts was not the only way they have assisted the Squannacook River Rail Trail. Last year, Townsend was awarded one of their grants to purchase an off-road ambulance. The grant had been applied for by Fire Chief Don Klein. This off-road ambulance can be used either in winter, when it is outfitted with skis and pulled by a snowmobile, or in the summer, when it is fitted with wheels and pulled by an ATV. Its value was demonstrated this past winter when it was used to transport an injured snowmobiler from the Harbor Pond area.

One of the motivations for building the Squannacook River Rail Trail is to provide a safe alternative to busy roads such as Route 119 for pedestrians and bicyclists, especially the youth of our community. With this grant as the foundation of our fundraising campaign, we hope that the day will come much sooner when there is a safe route for everyone wanting to ride or walk from one part of our towns to another.

MBTA demolishes shed

In March of 2013, the MBTA demolished the long-decaying storage shed along Depot Street in Townsend. This will help make way for a larger parking area for the trail's terminus in Townsend.