

RAIL TRAIL CONVERSION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Town of Sudbury, Massachusetts
Minutes of Meeting on May 10, 2007

Present: Pat Brown, Rebecca Corkin, Betty Foley, Bob Hall, Bridget Hanson, Dennis Mannone, Jennifer Pincus, Bill Place, Nancy Powers

Absent: Madeleine Gelsinon, Eric Poch, Dick Williamson, Carole Wolfe

Also Present: Residents Jim Nigrelli and John Donovan (member of the Agricultural Commission) and Paul Cavicchio (owner of Cavicchio Greenhouses)

There was no community input, and the meeting was convened at 7:35 P.M.

Pat Brown welcomed the new member of the Rail Trail Conversion Advisory Committee (RTCAC), Rebecca Corkin. Rebecca also serves on the Conservation Commission (ConCom) and will serve as the liaison between that Commission and the RTCAC.

The minutes of the April 4, 2007 meeting were approved without further discussion.

Summary and Discussion of the Decisions Voted at April, 2007 Town Meeting:

Chairman Pat Brown asked for the Committee's impressions of how the articles requesting CPA funds for three rail-trail studies fared at Town Meeting. Her disappointment with the meeting that was called immediately before Town Meeting by the Finance Committee (FinCom) to reconsider its earlier vote was shared by all of the RTCAC members. (Fin Com had initially considered the three articles on March 19, and voted 4-2 in favor of the title search, 3-3-1 (for/against/abstain) no position on the wildlife study, and 3-3-1 no position on the field survey. Fin Com then decided to reconsider the articles on April 9, immediately prior to the second night of Town Meeting.) Bill Place noted that he could not recall FinCom's ever having done that before, and Dennis Mannone pointed out that FinCom could have gone to the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) much before Town Meeting with their concerns. The upshot of the April 9 meeting with FinCom was that it would not go on record as approving even Article 22, the title search, which it had approved during its consideration of the rail-trail articles on March 19. FinCom was critical of the articles mainly because there were no estimates at all of what the trail would cost the Town to operate, and in particular, how much it would cost to maintain it. It has been pointed out, however, that such estimates were very hard to come by, often not receiving separate line items in town budgets. Pat was disappointed that the RTCAC was not able to present a stronger and better supported case to the FinCom, but Rebecca Corkin commented that the Committee should be pleased because when all was said and done the three articles it requested passed. And Bill Place noted that the 2007 request was for CPA funds, not monies that would impact the town budget or tax rate; maintenance would only become an issue when the trail was built

Nancy Powers reported hearing from a number of residents who asked why the RTCAC did not make a strong presentation to counter the negative comments made on the floor and in the days before Town Meeting. Both Jim Nigrelli's comments in opposition to the articles and Selectman John Drobinski's comments in favor of them were seen as well done, although Jennifer Pincus thought Mr. Drobinski's pledges went a bit beyond what could really be accomplished by the three studies.

Membership, Calendar and Procedural Items

Membership. Pat Brown submitted an e-mail to the Committee which she had sent to the Board of Selectmen on April 19. In it, she responded to a meeting of the Board of Selectman (BOS) on March 27 in which there was some discussion of the membership of the RTCAC. The committee is still waiting for a representative from the Park and Recreation Commission. The BOS is also considering a change in the roles that Town Staff Dennis Mannone and Bill Place will have on the Committee. In consideration of their long work days, made longer by frequent evening meetings, and their participation in the upcoming studies approved at Town Meeting, there is a possibility that their participation as regular members of the RTCAC would be reduced, and they would serve the Committee primarily in an advisory capacity as their expertise is required. This would alleviate the demands on the Director of Public Works Bill Place and the Director of Parks and Recreation Dennis Mannone to attend meetings, but would also preclude accepting the request that Conservation Coordinator Debbie Dineen be returned to the Committee as a voting member, since she serves on Town Staff. That leaves open the question of whether other residents will take their places as regular Committee members. The membership questions are likely to be on the agenda of the next BOS meeting on June 5, 2007.

Calendar and Procedural Items. Pat Brown distributed a spreadsheet describing the Rail Trail Development Tasks for May 2007 through December, 2008, presented at the May 8 meeting of the Board of Selectmen. It describes the tasks, concerns related to them, the parties responsible for carrying them out, and a timeline describing when they should commence and be completed. A copy of this spread sheet is appended to these minutes. Thus, the first task is for Town Staff to develop a short-term lease with the Executive Office of Transportation (EOT) to permit legal access to the right of way that will be necessary to perform the title search as well as the wildlife and survey studies. Another task, already underway, is the development of an RFP for the wildlife study. Debbie Dineen, the Conservation Coordinator, is writing a draft that she will present to ConCom at its next meeting on May 21. The Conservation Subcommittee of the RTCAC (Rebecca Corkin, Bridget Hanson and Carole Wolfe) will then work with Debbie to achieve a proposal that will be submitted to the BOS.

Much of the discussion that followed centered around the major task assigned to the RTCAC. The Committee is being charged with the development of a comprehensive review of rail-trail development that will be contained in a binder suitably formatted and easy to reference dealing with nearly every aspect of the subject. Its comprehensive nature can be seen in the outline, prepared by Dennis Mannone, in a memo from the BOS. A copy of the memo is also appended to these minutes. The review is to be of factual information, properly attributed, that the selectmen can use to base their decision on whether to go forward with development of the trail. They anticipate that the decision will be made in December of 2008, as indicated in the attached spread sheet. That will occur following "visioning sessions" in the fall of 2008, assuming that all of the work assigned the Committee is finished by then. Various ideas were put forward about how the study might proceed, what form the data would take and how specific problems might be handled. The Committee concentrated this evening on the first six parts of the task.

Pat Brown stressed that the scope of this document is the phase II right of way, and the associated amenities (paths, parking, and so on.) She asked specifically at the May 8 Board of Selectmen's meeting whether the phase III right of way should be considered, and was told specifically that it should not.

Pat Brown volunteered to make a first pass at the second topic, the RTCAC Timeline. . The third topic, a regional overview of trails in surrounding or other communities in Massachusetts is one that will require the most effort in this initial stage of the investigation. The Committee is to find out everything it can about the development of those trails and how they are used today, including how they were funded, what they cost, what kinds of surfaces were used, etc. The work will entail interviewing town officials and others involved in the development and maintenance of the trails. Bridget Hanson suggested it would be prudent to create a list of questions that would be used in the research for each trail. The Committee agreed and members are expected to come with their suggestions at the next RTCAC meeting on June 14. Dennis Mannone volunteered to create on the town computer electronic files, folders for each topic, in which the information can be stored as it is collected and reviewed. The information should be presented to the Committee, so that it can be discussed in public meeting.. Nancy Powers, one of five Committee members who are also members of the Friends of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail, volunteered the Friends to do the research on item IV in the tasks list, "Regional Overview of Bruce Freeman Rail Trail", as the Friends have been much involved in promoting the development of the entire 25-mile-long corridor.

Discussion of the tasks ended on a note of disappointment that the visioning sessions and decision by the BOS would not occur until late fall and December of 2008, which would mean that if the trail is to go forward and requires CPA funds for the 25% design those funds would not be requested until the fall of 2009 and would not be available until Town Meeting approved them in 2010. The hope was expressed that perhaps the BOS would revise its timeline and make its decision before the October deadline for CPA proposals if the RTCAC can successfully complete its mission in time to allow for that, or continue the visioning for a longer period

Subcommittees

Because several members of both the Safety and Conservation Subcommittees were not present there was little discussion of their work. As noted above, the Conservation Subcommittee is to work actively with Debbie Dineen on the RFP for the wildlife study. Rebecca Corkin has agreed to serve on this subcommittee with Bridget Hanson and Carole Wolfe. The Safety Subcommittee had done very little as a committee, and Bridget Hanson wondered whether it should exist if it is not going to meet on a regular basis. Pat Brown suggested that the current Public Safety Subcommittee was not effective, and that its membership, organization and/or role should be changed if it is to continue.

Change in RTCAC Meeting Time

The Committee has found it difficult to schedule its preferred meeting place, the conference room at the DPW building, and has been forced to move from place to place. This room is used by the Department of Health the second Thursday of every month. In an effort to find a time when the DPW site might be available on a regular basis a decision was made to determine which evenings of the week it is available. Bridget Hanson will look into that, and Pat Brown will ask committee members which nights of the week they are regularly available, hopefully finding a day of the week that will work for everyone.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 P.M.

Public Commentary

John Donovan, who is the vice chairman of the Agricultural Commission, proffered the services of that body in the task before the RTCAC, as a subcommittee of the RTCAC or in some other capacity. He noted that the trail will impact many of the 1200 acres under cultivation in Sudbury, and the Commission is concerned that the impact might be sufficient to drive some farmers away. The Commission will have its last meeting of the year in June, making it difficult for the RTCAC to explore in the short term how it might work with the Commission. The RTCAC and the Agricultural Commission will try to set up a joint meeting in September. Paul Cavicchio, whose greenhouses are a substantial part of the agricultural business in town, also urged the Committee to work with the Agricultural Commission, as he fears the impact of the trail might be very serious.

Pat Brown noted that membership in RTCAC is conferred by the Board of Selectmen (that is, members of the Agricultural Commission cannot be accepted by RTCAC as a subcommittee.) However, a subcommittee of RTCAC members could be considered to investigate the concerns and questions of those pursuing agriculture along the right of way in Sudbury. This could be part of, or in addition to, a subcommittee considering the concerns and questions of commercial property owners whose businesses may be affected by the proposed trail.

Mr. Donovan also injected a personal note about rail trails. His wife is confined to a wheel chair, but that has not kept the couple from traveling and visiting many parks all over the country. Having dealt with the shortcomings of rough trails, he emphasized the need for smooth paved surfaces to make them ADA compliant and useful.

Submitted by Bob Hall on May, 18, 2007

Resubmitted on June 13, 2007

Approved on June 14, 2007

To: Rail Trail Conversion Advisory Committee
From: Board of Selectmen
Date: May 8, 2007
Re: Proposed work plan for RTCAC

I. OVERVIEW

To have the RTCAC work on researching and assembling all the other pieces of information the Board of Selectmen and Town will need for design decisions. RTCAC will develop a notebook (three ring binder format), with a table of contents that outlines topic areas that require additional data collection. The RTCAC will work on this for the period May 2007 through June 2008, with quarterly drafts submitted to the Selectmen and Town Manager for review.

II. RTCAC TIMELINE

- History of Sudbury rail trail to date
- RTCAC development
- Committee meetings
- Town meetings
- Contract services
- Speakers
- Community outreach

III. REGIONAL OVERVIEW OF SURROUNDING OR OTHER RAIL TRAILS IN MASSACHUSETTS

- Research on committees – mission statements, responsibilities
- Timeline in other communities
- Funding
- Trail designs
- Surfaces of rail trails
- Estimates of types and numbers of users- i.e. walkers, roller blader's, cyclists, parents with strollers, etc.
- Estimated number of weekly users by season or quarter, broken down into % from within town and % from out of town / passing through.

IV. REGIONAL OVERVIEW OF BRUCE FREEMAN RAIL TRAIL

- Committees

- Timeline
- Funding
- Trail Designs
- Surfaces

V. ABUTTERS CONCERNS

- Homeowners
- Business
- Town
- Mitigation
- Security
- Privacy

VI. FUNDING OPTIONS

- 10% design
- State Funding
- Local Funding CPC, Town articles & capital
- Grants
- Private
- Non-profit

VII. COST

- 10% Design
- Cost Estimates
- Construction
- Maintenances
- Amenities

VIII. SAFETY CONCERNS

- Police
- Fire
- Turn arounds
- Lighting
- Intersection crossing
- Do other trails use "location markers" for public safety response?
- Gather data on number and type of calls that required a Public Safety response broken down by season or quarter to correlate with user estimates.

IX. LAWS AND BYLAWS

- State
- Local
- Parking hours
- Vehicle access
- Trash
- Dogs/Other animals
- Motorized vehicles

X. Access/Parking

XI. Consistency with town character

XII. Annotated List of Sources

- Published sources (e.g. web sites, town or state reports)
- Interviews (dates, summary of interview, etc.)
- Statutes and bylaws

Rail Trail Development Tasks for May 2007 through December 2008

Task	Concerns	Responsible party	Timeline
Develop a short term lease with EOT to work on the ROW	Consultants need to have legal permission to access ROW	Town Manager Town Counsel	Attempt to have in place before July 1, 2007 – Depends on EOT staff to cooperate with timing
Engage special Counsel for title work	Must be substantially completed before any other CPC funds spent	Town Manager Town Counsel	Plan is to have title work completed in July/August 2007, so 4 season wildlife study can begin in September, enabling staff to include the results of wildlife study into the base map in the late fall/winter of 2008
Development of RFP for 4 season wildlife study. Debbie will begin with RTCAC draft scope of work, add in DEP guidelines, and present to ConCom and subcommittee to develop draft for Maureen and Legal office to approve and issue	Project must start with fall season to get all four seasons done in time to get flagged habitat areas incorporated into base map in the fall/winter of 2008	Conservation Coordinator, ConCom, Subcommittee of RTCAC, Town Manager	Debbie will present her draft RFP to ConCom at meeting on May 21, and then meet with RTCAC subcommittee. Plan is to issue the RFP as early as possible after this, with caveat that final award can't happen until title work is done
Development of draft outline and format of a comprehensive binder of information for RTCAC to work on. Draft outline to have table of contents listing topic areas that require additional data collection and documentation	RTCAC to work on researching and assembling objective, properly cited compendium of information the Town/Board will need for design decisions	Park & Recreation Director will prepare the draft of the notebook	Dennis is developing a draft which will be circulated to other staff, then finalized to give to the RTCAC on May 10, their next scheduled meeting. The RTCAC will work on this project for the next 12-18 months, with quarterly drafts submitted to staff and Selectmen for review. Plan is to have this ready at the same time that all the consulting work is done in the late Fall/Winter of 2008.

Task	Concerns	Responsible party	Timeline
Development of RFP for engineering work	Plan is to have final survey map include wetlands, and wildlife habitats	DPW Director and Conservation Coordinator	Plan to issue the RFP as early as possible, with caveat that final award can't happen until title work is done, in order to line up engineering firms and have time to discuss work scope with applicants. Bill Place advises work best done when foliage is off the trees - fall/winter of 2007. Additionally, plan is to have the consultant return once wildlife study is done to survey and incorporate the habitat areas. This will be fall 2008.
Funding Sources for construction investigated	To have lead time to know all possibilities and obligations of each entity	Assistant Planner	May and June, 2007
Community "Visioning" Sessions to gain input from residents, boards, abutters	Town will be near the point where we will have sufficient data and information to make informed design decisions	Town Manager, Board of Selectmen, staff, RTCAC	Detailed plans for the visioning sessions developed fall 2008, assuming all consulting and RTCAC work is done in time to produce decision level information for Town to consider. Visioning sessions to be held somewhere in the November/December period of 2008
Board of Selectmen makes "Go Forward/Don't Go Forward" Decision		Board of Selectmen	December 2008