

Squannacook Greenways, Inc.

Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, July 28, 2021

Attending:

Peter Carson, Mark Cram, Peter Cunningham, Bruce Easom, Dan Hager, Tim Palmer, Bill Rideout, Joan Wotkowicz

Recap of MassTrails grant

MassTrails sent us a letter saying we were not selected for a grant this year. They received 125 proposals requesting just over \$11.6M, and were able to award only 52 projects totaling \$3.5M. We discussed how this loss affects our construction schedule and also our Groton CPA grant.

Bill and Joan had a follow-up phone call with Amanda Lewis today. She our proposal was good, but we are not on the priority list and are not an Environmental Justice community. We were in the middle tier, but they had to distribute funding around the state.

She said future applications would have a better chance if we show trail usage and community support. Bill asked her about funding the entire section from Shepherd's to Bertozzi, but she advised against asking for \$200K, as this would reduce our chances of winning.

Pete Carson noted that we were earmarked for federal funding years ago, but Townsend did not move forward. He asked if federal money might still be available, particularly now that the Groton portion is supported by town CPA funds. He asked if we should consider constructing to the Groton line instead of stopping at Crosswinds.

Peter Cunningham pointed out that previously earmarked funding was for a paved trail, but he will reach out to Congresswoman Lori Trahan and Representative Sheila Harrington to ask about funding. Tim offered to reach out to Senator John Cronin. We will also ask about

COVID relief money.

Bill generously offered to personally fund \$100K to build the section to Harbor Church, which Gary quoted at \$140K. The Harbor would be a more inviting destination than Old Meetinghouse Road and would increase usage, giving us a stronger MassTrails application next year. We would apply for the Groton section next, as planned.

Board members were understandably concerned about using Bill's funds and want to explore other options first. Bill would also consider a loan, if we can locate other sources of funding to repay.

If we must pause construction for a year, the following year would need to be in Groton because of CPA funding, or we would need an extension.

Groton CPA

Bruce said Groton town meeting approved \$30K specifically as a match for a MassTrails grant, so he questions whether we can use it to match other money raised by Squannacook Greenways. Peter said the CPA committee can advise us whether we need to go back to town meeting. We decided to wait before taking that step.

Bruce voiced an idea of starting construction at Bertozzi and working north as far as our funds allow, which would keep momentum going. However, that would deplete our finances, which are needed elsewhere.

Plan for granite pillar

Bill put out two requests for bids on engraving a granite pillar with names of \$1,000 donors. Leominster Monument, who made pillars for the MA Central Rail Trail, bid \$4,500. Townsend Monument has not submitted a bid yet.

Mark said stone companies should be less expensive than monument businesses. Bill will try Powell Stone & Gravel and Fletcher Granite.

Plan for engraved bricks

Chris Overton tentatively rescheduled brick installation for the week of August 16.

Status of trash barrels

Bill spoke with Gary Shepherd, who agreed to have the barrels emptied regularly. A third barrel has been added.

Update on Steve Meehan pedestrian bridge

Stan Dillis presented the plan for approaches to the proposed bridge on Old Meetinghouse Road at the Townsend Select Board meeting. They were very supportive and gave authorization as the property owner for Stan to approach other town boards.

Next steps for Japanese Knotweed

Townsend does not have insurance to cover for Olin Lathrop as a volunteer, and he does not work as a business, so we probably cannot use his services for herbicide application.

Dan suggests we cut the plants down now and apply an herbicide in August. The herbicide will not affect surrounding plants. He is a licensed pesticide applicator and will look into getting insurance.

We decided to cut it now and then set up a second volunteer day for Dan to apply the herbicide. Joan suggested we let the cut plants dry out on site, preferably on a plastic sheet to isolate them from the soil. We planned a work day for Sunday at 4:00 PM, meeting at Harbor Church.

Other maintenance items

Gary offered two-inch thick oak planks, which he will cut to length for the bridge near the Grist Mill when we are ready. We will wait until fall.

Paul Funch walked the trail and reported some minor issues with drainage near one of the

culverts. Gary plans to add more stone dust to build up the trail in that area.

Plans for opening ceremony

The event will be on September 25 starting at 2:00 PM. Bill has been sending invitations and received many positive responses from grant funders, legislators, and donors.

Bill suggests we start the program with an introduction by Peter, followed by an invocation from the St. John's pastor, a few words from Townsend Select Board chair Veronica Kell (if she agrees), a talk by Bill, and finally a guided walk.

Bill will develop a description that we can use to announce the event in the Groton Herald, Lowell Sun, Paul Funch's trails list (Bruce), Townsend Facebook (Joan), Townsend web site (Joan), Groton Facebook (Pete Carson).

Financial report

Bill reported no income or expenses this month. Our balance is \$45,846.18.

Other events/publicity/fundraising

Dan asked about Go Fund Me and noted that other rail trails have made \$4-5K. Tim said we could include a link in our communications. Joan agreed to look into it.

Review minutes

A motion to approve the minutes from our meeting on June 30, 2021 was seconded and passed unanimously.

Next Meeting

Squannacook Greenways will hold our next rail trail meeting on **Wednesday, August 25** at 7:00 PM via Zoom.

Respectfully submitted,

Joan Wotkowicz, Clerk

Squannacook Greenways, Inc.