

## Squannacook River Rail Trail Funding Exploration Committee

Minutes of Public Meeting of Jan. 14, 2009 – Approved at meeting on Feb. 11, 2009

Location: Groton Town Hall, First floor meeting room, Groton

Time: 7 pm

Members Present: Hirk Fortin (Chairman), Bill Martin, Steve Meehan, Bill Rideout (Secretary)

Members Absent: Ken Gerken

Attendees: Mark Cram (Townsend), Al Futterman (NRWA) Peter Cunningham, Bruce Easom, Peter Carson, Kevin McKenzie (Groton committee members).

The meeting was brought to order at 7:06 pm. This was a joint meeting with the Groton rail trail committee, which also was brought to order at 7:06 pm. The first action was the unanimous approval of the meeting minutes for Nov. 20, 2008.

Next, meeting with representatives from Congressman Olver's and Congresswoman Tsongas' office was discussed. Al Futterman said he was in contact with Kristin Wood from Olver's Fitchburg office and Jane Adams from Tsongas' office. No date had been set for a joint meeting with representatives from our committee and representatives from both congressmen. Al said that since it was difficult to find a date acceptable to both offices, we would try to accept whatever date could be arranged. It was decided that the major theme of the meeting would be the 10% local match. We agreed to bring a few hard-copy viewgraphs discussing the benefits of the Squannacook River Rail Trail, but to keep it short since Tsongas' office had already spoken with us. We decided to hold the joint meeting in Groton, since it was about midway between the two offices.

We discussed what it meant for a project to be shovel-ready, and decided it meant 100% of the design done, not just 25%. We decided to ask the Massachusetts Joint Transportation Committee (MJTC) whether earmarked funds could be used for design in order to get our project shovel-ready. Previously MJTC had said earmark funds could not be used until all funding was in place, but that may have changed with the economic crisis.

Peter Cunningham discussed his conversations with State Senator Panagiotakos about state finances, which are bleak. Peter said the only bright light was the possibility a state transportation bill might be passed with some set-asides for alternative transportation. Peter also noted the state match for CPA funds had dropped to 70%, and estimates for this year range as low as 30%.

Next, maintenance costs were discussed. Bruce Easom will continue his discussions with Tom Delany,

the highway department supervisor in Groton. He then will try to get similar information from Ayer, Pepperell, and Dunstable. He will also contact DCR. He hopes to have this information before the next meeting.

We also discussed some refurbishing work being done on the Nashua River Rail Trail near Groton School Pond. This work is necessary because the contractor's did not follow engineering specifications. The concern was raised by Pete Carson that without close supervision, such a problem could occur on the Squannacook River Rail Trail, possibly leaving the town's to deal with a problem.

We discussed sending a letter to Boston and Maine about possibly dropping freight rights on the Greenville branch north of Hollingsworth and Vose. It was pointed out that this issue could have financial implications if some sort of suit occurred after the trail was built. It was agreed to send individual letters from each committee in a single envelop. Bill Rideout made a motion to approve sending such a letter, Bill Martin seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Pete Carson raised the idea of funding the local match through private fundraising if the present approach of government funding went nowhere. It was agreed that alternative trail building scenarios might need to be examined, but only after the present approach was tried first.

Steve Meehan agreed to follow up his contact with Karin Canfield, president of the Townsend Recreational Activity Council.

The next meeting date was set for Wednesday, Feb 11, 2009 at 7 pm in Memorial Hall in Townsend.

Respectfully submitted,

Bill Rideout  
Secretary, Squannacook River Rail Trail Funding Exploration Committee