

Squannacook River Rail Trail Funding Exploration Committee

Minutes of Public Meeting of June 11, 2009 (Approved Aug. 20, 2009)

Location: Memorial Hall, Townsend

Time: 7 pm

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

Members Absent: None

Attendees: Bruce Easom, Peter Cunningham, Peter Carson, Steve Legge (Groton committee), Al Futterman (NRWA), Cheryl Rideout, Joan Wotkowicz

The meeting was brought to order at 7:05 pm. The first agenda item was the upcoming Townsend Board of Selectmen meeting on July 16, 2009. Peter Cunningham, Steve Meehan, and Bill Rideout confirmed they would be there. Steve Meehan said he had spoken with Patti McCloy, who is Townsend representative to the Montachusets Regional Planning Commission (MRPC), and she had said she would be at the BOS meeting. Other committee members were invited to attend, but it was not generally felt that a large turnout was needed. Bill Rideout mentioned that maintenance might be discussed as an issue, and that we should be prepared to discuss that. It was agreed that Groton would offer to submit the Project Need Form to MassHighway, and the Townsend Board of Selectmen were simply being asked for support. Bill Rideout agreed to email everyone a copy of the powerpoint slide Steve would give the BOS. We also discussed the amount left in the present North Central Massachusetts earmark. According to Kristen Wood from Olver's office, there is presently 2 million left.

The next agenda item was a discussion of Bruce Easom's plan for competing the 100% design stage. Under Bruce's plan, 80% of the design money would come from the federal earmark. Most of the other 20% might come from a Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) grant. This would require only a small amount left to be privately fundraised. Bruce also saw the Groton Community Preservation Act (CPA) being useful in this process, because CPA money might be accessed faster than DCR grant money. In this way, Groton CPA money would only be used after a DCR grant is won, and a large percentage would be paid back when the DCR funds were available. Bill Rideout asked about the chances of DCR paying for design work. Al Futterman mentioned his conversation with Paul Jahnique, who encouraged him to try. Bruce offered to run other scenarios, and Bill Rideout asked him to run the \$370,000 design cost estimated by FST. We also discussed the possibility of asking for help from Townsend Recreational Activities Council for fund-raising assistance.

The next agenda item was federal earmarks. Both Tsongas' and Olver's offices have

added preliminary earmark language. Al Futterman offered to follow-up with Kristen Wood from Olver's office, and Peter Cunningham with Tsongas' office, to make sure that process is continuing.

Next we discussed the upcoming meeting with DCR Commissioner Rick Sullivan on July 24th at NRWA. Al Futterman suggested inviting Emily Norton, and Bill Rideout agreed to do so. Al Futterman said Sean Navin and Dan Driscoll from DCR would also be attending, and Peter Cunningham said an aid from Panagiotakis' office would also attend. We agreed that discussing the lease would be a top priority, and a possible grant would be a secondary item.

Finally, we discussed Peter Cunningham's contact with Colin Durrant, the person from the Executive Office of Transportation mentioned in the Globe article as the person rebuilding the state's approach to rail trail. Peter said he was not optimistic this person would cause any change, but said he would call him back.

The next meeting was scheduled for Thursday, July 9, 2009. The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Bill Rideout
Secretary, Squannacook River Rail Trail Funding Exploration Committee