

Squannacook Greenways, Inc.

Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, May 24, 2023

Attending:

Pete Carson, Mark Cram, Peter Cunningham, Bruce Easom, Dale Gates, Linda Mack, Tim Palmer, Bill Rideout, Joan Wotkowicz

Phase 3 construction status

Construction is finished! We appreciate the attention James gives to detail. Gary donated some extra landscaping work along the edges. Pete has been hearing positive comments from Groton residents.

No turtles were seen during monitoring. We now have an approved protection plan, but may not have Jenny's services as monitor for phase 4. Peter started a dialog with Tim Maguire of NHESP about the process and the date requirements vs. actual observations.

Recap of trail walk on potential extension

During the May 13 walk along the next section to the southeast, some of the challenges seen include wetlands that will require wattles, permitting issues, and wash-outs that will need new culverts or bridges.

Bill pointed out that MassTrails is now receiving \$10M per year for grants, so we may be able to get funding to hire consultants to work on permitting as far as Cutler Park. He suggested we apply for a grant.

Peter encouraged us to start looking at extending the MBTA lease to the far side of the Groton trestle bridge. Bill said that CSX, who now owns the freight rights, charges a fee for dropping the rights. Peter will reach out to the MBTA realtor to learn more.

Bill suggested we start getting quotes from contractors. Peter will ask David Ross Associates to quote engineering/permitting for

the Groton extension and also for the trestle near Jefts Street in Townsend.

He will also speak with Margaret Scarsdale and John Cronin to ask for their support and help with state agencies and CSX.

Future board members

Peter expressed concern about needing younger people. Tim suggested we try to engage the next generation through school environmental and/or technical groups.

Bill suggested we might reach out to schools when we install wattles. Dale said there may be youth soccer events where we could host a table.

Road crossings and Groton bricks

Mark designed center islands as an alternative to bollards for the road crossings. Chris Overton quoted installation of cobblestones with plantings. A motion to approve the installations was seconded and approved unanimously.

We plan to permanently install "No Motorized Vehicles" signs in conjunction with the road crossings project. We may also install signs displaying our logo.

Peter will ask the Groton Highway Department to paint crosswalks.

Townsend Historical Society projects

On May 17, the Historical Society voted to proceed with historical village project, with Gary Shepherd as project manager. The project will include resurfacing the rail bed behind the historical society to make a walking path, building a sidewalk along Route 119 for bicyclists, resurfacing the two rail bridges and adding railings, and expanding the parking lot at Harbor Church. We discussed options for the

crossings at South Street.

158 Main Street wetland violation

The Townsend Conservation Commission continues to push for remediation, but we are concerned about the delay. A lot of silt has accumulated and was running across the rail trail after the recent rain.

Joan attended the May 10 Commission meeting and learned that DCR visited the site and saw the siltation running onto state park property.

A suggestion was brought up to contact the railroad, but Bill prefers to first get a lawyer to send a legal letter.

We would like to see the Commission move forward with issuing fines. Linda suggested we send a formal letter addressed to the whole commission. A motion to authorize Joan to draft the letter was seconded and passed unanimously. Linda will help and Joan will inform James of our plans before sending.

ATV activity

Joan observed tracks from recent motor vehicle activity on the rail trail in the vicinity of 172 Main Street. One or more ATVs cleared a path from the field by mashing down trees and other vegetation to gain access and drive down the trail. Joan will contact the Townsend Police.

Phase 4 construction plan

MassTrails informed Bill that we won the \$150K grant to build phase four, from Crosswinds Drive to South Street.

James looked over the site and suggests we use large rocks with smaller rocks behind them for bank reinforcements. Bill, Mark, and Peter will walk the trail on Friday with Gary to review the bank restoration project.

Bill will find out if Harbor Village shopping center is needed as a staging area.

We will need to install new wattles. We'll also need new DEP signs and copies of the Orders of

Conditions in both towns.

Financial report / grants & fundraising

Gary estimated \$320K for phase 4 construction. With MassTrails, Groton CPA, and \$80K we have on hand, we have \$325K.

We are in favor of continuing to buy directors insurance.

Maintenance

Joan reported that the trash barrel at Sterilite gate is full. The trees we planted survived the weeks of no rain followed by frost.

Some of the knotweed sprouted back up, but it appears that someone sprayed herbicide. There is a lot of invasive garlic mustard growing near Old Meetinghouse Road.

Other projects and events

We tentatively planned a celebratory walk from Pete's house to Bailey's and back on June 2.

We tentatively planned a wattles workday for October 14 with rain date October 15. Joan will estimate the number of wattles needed.

Review minutes

A motion to accept the minutes from April 26 was seconded and passed unanimously.

Next Meeting

Squannacook Greenways will hold our next rail trail meeting on **Wednesday, June 21, 2023** at 7:00 P.M. via Zoom.

Respectfully submitted,

Joan Wotkowicz

Clerk

Squannacook Greenways, Inc.