

Ashburnham Rail Trail, Inc.
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, Oct 5, 2017
Lower Meeting Room, Ashburnham Town Hall

In attendance: Rosemarie Meissner, Cec Snow, Chris Picone, Sherisa Sterling, Elaine Membrino, Jessica Caouette.

Guests: Annette Allain, Tom Allain.

- I. Call to Order
- II. Approved the Minutes from August and September 2017. Chris will send to Donna for posting.

III. Old Business

a. **501 (c) 3 Application- Jess and Rosemarie**

We opened the bank account and have enough donations to file the application with the IRS. Once we apply for 501(c)3, we can then apply for grants as a non-profit because we are already approved; we just need the tax filing.

The \$3000 with the Town can be used anytime for trail work (e.g., signs), but we cannot use that money to start a non-profit.

b. **Review and Storage of Archives -Elaine**

Elaine had copies of the 25% design plan, with the folder locations they came from.

All the rail trail info is now in one container in Town Hall.

The 25% Design Plan from 2007 would no longer be up to date. We might have to update the environmental conditions, abutters, etc. Costs have changed, too. If we can work with the same company (StanTech) we might be able to have the update done more cheaply. RM has been in touch with the same 2 people who did our 2007 plan.

The Town paid for the last 25% Design Plan with a vote from the Jan 2006 Special Town Meeting. And RM thought there was a small grant. We should check the Jan 2006 meeting notes to see what that 25% plan cost.

RM has asked about the 50% design plan, but that seems like it would be beyond what we could raise quickly.

c. **Signs and Trail Markers- Cec**

10 should be enough, with rules at each trailhead.

We also need markers.

d. **WhitneyPondBridgeFence-HOLD**

We can put up discarded deck fencing.

There is still interest in a recreation area at Whitney Pond. The beavers and sediments would probably limit that site to be viewing only, with potential kayak/canoeing.

e. **Status Report to AEDC & BOS- Rosemarie**

We reviewed a table that RM had prepared. The status report has been presented to AEDC, and now will go to BoS at their first meeting in Nov.

At AEDC one question was sidewalks. There were sidewalks in the original plans to redo 101 (the TIP?). But now they have been removed, so it has been requested to include sidewalks so there is access to the rail trail. We should try to attend the early Nov. BoS meeting.

IV. New Business for Discussion

a. **Fall Work Day**

Oct 28 will be a Work Day. 10 AM at Landry Field, walk in towards the ravine.

Status Report asks DPW to remove boulder and debris piles that block access from Williams to the ravine.

RM will ask BoS if DPW can mow Turnpike to the ravine.

b. **MRTC Consultant Selection**

RM and CS attended a MRTC meeting about marketing our trails in this region. Sheri Bean will be speaking on this in Worcester on Oct. 10. MRTC has selected a consultant for marketing.

c. **Collaboration with other Groups- Programming**

MRTC spoke about programming like Freedom's Way does, but with more focus on our region. North County Land Trust, etc would be good collaborators.

Can we highlight spots on the trail with historical and natural focus points, so it is not "just a walk"? For example, there were two RR crossings that were considered "villages" long ago. Historical Commission (Christina Sargeant) would have the information to highlight about town history along the trail. JC and EM will ask the Historical Commission for info we might use.

Other collaborations: Friends of the Library can offer walks. Winter Tracking. Geological formations. And maybe we could add a RT event.

d. **Leominster Tool Trailer**

Loaned from their Rec Dept. We can request what tools we would need, and then borrow the trailer later from the Leominster Rec Dept.

e. **Fundraising/Grants**

We can apply to the Community Foundation as a non-profit. Squannacook got grants of \$10-18 K. Wachuset Greenway too. They were not state funded, but “greenways” are cheaper. Contact Mary Beth Jansen to come to next meeting to discuss grant options.

Bruce Anderson, under Boston Foundation, has money for mapping. To complement current open space maps, “bring it down” to trail maps. Mapping grants are about \$3000.

MassDevelopment: Commonwealth Places. “Place-making” grants are popular now. But those must serve lower-income households, and Ashburnham may not be eligible.

People for Bikes. They fund engineering and design work, including bridges. We might consider this sources for a 50% design plan, as they go up to \$10 K.

National Assn of Realtors. Microgrants for those with trails as part of a master plan, which we qualify for. Due 15th of each month.

Still a need for fundraising.

Long bike race? But that requires police, DPW etc. So maybe a family ride series?

5/10K road race? Could be monthly. Could collaborate with the races that are already happening, such as the Ash-West spring benefit, Ryan’s Gift, and ask North Medford Running Club (who has timing equipment and a Blood Hill Race each year). Add Watatic Mtn as a race? There would be a passport or discount for registering for (and completing) all the races in the series.

Later: a triathlon? Partner with Sunset Lake for the beach, or similar. Camp Winnekeag? But a triathlon is pretty labor intensive.

Partner with Wachusett Brewery? River Styx?

Cultural Commission grant is coming soon on Oct. 15. Comes from lottery money. Do not have to be Ashburnham residents. We should consider ways to apply for Cultural Commission.RM’s Pitch (as seen in Saco ME): You buy a chair or get sponsors to buy the chair (\$80 each), then pay an artist to paint each chair, then auction them off. The money from the auction goes to the group raising money.

Next Meeting: November 2, 2017. 6:30 PM, Town Hall.

(*CP cannot attend that night. Someone will need to take minutes.

Adjourned: 8:05 PM.