

Ashburnham Rail Trail, Inc.
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, July 6, 2017
Lower Meeting Room, Ashburnham Town Hall

In attendance: Rosemarie Meissner, Cec Snow, Sherisa Sterling, Sallie Thoma, Walt, Meissner, Bill Johnson

Community Day Re-Cap-

Cec reported that there was a lot of interest and in general it went very well. Community Day as a whole was not as well attended as it was in years past but we got our information out. Further group discussion was that the event was not laid out very well. Booths would be better placed on the lawn closer to the old VMS site to create more of a fairground atmosphere. The classic cars should have been on the asphalt. Sallie said she would give George Simmons feedback. Sallie added that there was no Historic Tour Trolley as it had to be retired. It was suggested that organizers include kids' game in the future. For example, ring toss, go fish, dunk tank, etc. Perhaps each grade could take a game on as a responsibility. Regarding the RT guided walks, no one participated at 1 PM and only one person at 4 PM.

Trail Development-

Cec and Rosemarie reported that they had walked the RT from the Bresnahan Center to Whitney Pond. Cec had reached out to a Scout leader at Community Day and enlisted their help in clearing the trail. They discussed the initial focus would be to establish that portion of the RT as a Nature Walk with a Nature Viewing Area at the pond. Further discussed the addition of a kiosk that would include wildlife information as well as historical info provided by the Historical Commission. Rosemarie has had conversations with Christina Sargent of the Historical Commission who said that they would partner with the RT to sign historical sites along the RT. Discussion that although the RR bridge structurally appeared sound, the decking was not and that likely the RR bridge would need to be fenced off.

Chris Picone, although not present, had reached out by email to volunteer his time to spearhead the clearing of the trail from Williams Rd. Crossing towards Landry Field. This is a short segment but the house abutting the trail is under contract and it would be prudent to clearly define the trail to avoid any possible misunderstandings in the future.

Chris also suggested that we begin clearing the trail from the ravine to Turnpike Rd. There are down trees. Sallie and Walt suggested we reach out to Rob Brennan and/or Mike Salem to see if they would volunteer their time and heavy equipment (or charge a reduce fee) to help move bigger downed trees. The idea is to have a very clear wide path.

Cec and Rosemarie also discussed the abutter encroachment of the Trail by Mr. Mike's by the bus company. It was decided we would clear that very short stretch but that the Town would be asked to contact the bus company. This section of the trail could lead to a possible

kayak/canoe boat launch. There have been requests by the community to increase the availability of public non-motorized boat launches.

Cec and Rosemarie suggested we hold a Trail Clearing Day some time after July 19. Sherisa and Walt said they would try to be available. Sherisa is available late afternoons and on Fridays.

Bill Johnson reported that the Town has a Right of Way (ROW) from Puffer Street to Willard Road. The Town will inform the abutting landowners, putting them on notice.

501 (c) 3 Application-

Jess Caouette, although not present, informed via email that she has been working on the application with guidance from Ed Vitone. To file the application, we will need to request the filing fee from the RT Town Accounts. There was discussion as to whether the filing fee check could come from the Town or did the RT need to open a bank account and have access to checks. Bill Johnson volunteered to discuss options with Enterprise Bank.

In her email Jess listed what we need to file an application- a Mission Statement, elect a minimal number of officers, and submit By-Laws.

Mission Statement

Cec will build a Mission Statement, working with Sallie. It is very possible that we already have one in the RT Brochure. At this point it was decided we keep it generic and update over time.

Election of Officers

Nominations, firsts, seconds, and unanimous votes for the following:

Chair: Rosemarie Eldridge Meissner

Vice Chair: Cecelia Snow

Secretary: Christopher Picone

Jessica Caouette: Treasurer

By-Laws

Walt Meissner volunteered to pull together generic by-laws for the initial purpose of filing our non-profit application.

Review and Storage of Archives

At the moment, RT documents and archives are in several locations- Sallie's house, in the basement of Town Hall; and with ACT. It was suggested we begin reviewing the archives at Sallie's house consolidating, recycling, and filing archives into Bankers' Boxes. Sallie said we could use her home office. We need volunteers to assist.

We will get permission to review materials gathered by Eric Smith, the former town planner. There is a file cabinet in Town Hall. We can get further information in old Town reports as the RT had to contribute to the Annual Report. It was learned that there is no Donor Database.

Trail Rules

Cec prepared Trail Rules that were accepted by the members. The Rules will be posted on a tree near trailheads and will also include a statement that the Trail is Under development. The rules state that the trail is for non-motorized use, open dawn to dusk, no alcohol, leash pets and clean-up after them, no littering, be careful at road crossings.

Other

Rosemarie gave an update on signs. Pedestrian/Bike Warning signs were ordered and are waiting to be installed by DPW. She also requested information from Expressive Prints re: the cost of small plastic trail markers. Share the Road signs were priced out at \$11.50 each. These signs might be used in the future to temporarily push cyclists down Williams to Turnpike as a way around the ravine. RT signs made by Elaine were installed at Willard Rd. entrance as well as at Cashman Hill. They will need to be permanently installed. Chris Picone has volunteered to do this if someone can drop off a posthole digger.

Rosemarie and Cec had requested a meeting with the Bresnahan Center. It was postponed by the Bresnahan Center to September.

RT Brochures were placed at the library as well as Town Hall.

Cec will submit an application with Monty Tech for the building of a kiosk that will be installed at Willard Rd.

Chris Picone is working with the Conservation Commission to obtain a permit for intended work by the DPW grading and clearing the Willard Rd. entrance.

Meeting was adjourned. Next Meeting is schedule for August 3.