



Town of Topfield

TOPSFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

Rail Trail Committee

Minutes of Committee Meeting February 25, 2010 – 8:00 PM

Members Present: Joe Geller (chair), Dave Read, Gregg Demers, Roy Baessler, Kat Tremblay and Katherine Carlson

Guest: Norm Isler

1. **Old Business:** Minutes from the December 7, 2009 meeting were unanimously approved.
2. **National Historic Structure for IRB:** Norm presented the committee with a proposal to nominate the Ipswich River Bridge as a National Historic Structure (NHS). The bridge was built in 1888 and the first step to determine if it would qualify for designation is to fill-out and submit a Historic Structure Inventory Form. The proposal would be put forth jointly by the Topsfield Historical Society and the Topsfield Rail Trail Committee and ultimately need to be approved by the Selectmen. A more extensive application will need to be completed and Norm will keep us posted on the process.
3. **Conservation Commission update:** On February 24th (yesterday) a Request for Determination of Applicability (RDA) was submitted to remove the rails and ties and recompact the trail by Iron Horse Preservation Society. The Selectmen unanimously approved the proposal for IHPS to remove the track subject to the necessary approval and requirements of the Conservation Commission. The trail's 75 abutters will now be notified and the Cons-Comm hearing will take place in two weeks. Katherine Carlson has agreed to do the mailing. They recently successfully removed 1200 feet of track in the town of Danvers and will be back to do more.
4. **Wetlands flagging update:** This important Conservation Commission process still needs to be completed on phase 3B of the trail located between Rt. 97 to the Wenham town line. Jim MacDougal said that he can quickly complete this last section as soon as the ground thaws sufficiently.
5. **Fairgrounds update:** Essex Agricultural Society is being contacted regarding a license from the Town to allow them to drive their vehicles across the trail as needed for their Fair related activities. They are also being contacted to remove the piles of dirt from the trail.
6. **Phase 3 design proposal:** Joe discussed the proposal received from Beals Associates to prepare a Phase 3 concept plan and accompanying drawing including facilitating several meetings for phase 3 of the trail. The initial proposal came in at \$9,390 but Joe isn't sure

we'd need all aspects of the proposal and that we may be able to save some money with design of phase 3.

7. **B2B Earmark update:** Dave informed the committee that Federal Highway and Mass Highway have ruled that the towns of Topsfield, Wenham and Danvers are not eligible to apply for any portion of the \$716k in the congressional earmark funding designated for the Border to Boston Trail. The reason given was that the three southern towns, while also in Essex County, are in the MAPC region where the 5 northern B2B towns are part of the Merrimac Valley Planning Commission regional planning organization and the funds are technically on their Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) for that region. While this is disappointing for the town and Rail Trail Committee, we will press on and apply for grants and discuss with the towns of Wenham and Danvers if we should jointly try to get funds for our southern section of trail on the MAPC TIP at some point in the future.
8. **Trail Maintenance Plan:** Roy suggested that the Trail Committee now develop a long term plan for maintenance of the trail now that the first section is almost a year old. One option would be to see if the Friends of Topsfield Trails would be willing to purchase a good weed-wacker and power grader for the trail. He would also look into if the equipment could be stored in the old firehouse. He will update the committee on this at future meetings and suggested we get a group together for some minor trail maintenance on an upcoming weekend in March.
9. **Paving option near playgrounds:** The committee discussed the possibility of paving a short 100 ft. section of trail between the tot-lot and playground from the parking lot and the edge of the woods to help with erosion and drainage issues. Roy received an estimate of \$3,700 to do this work. The Committee agreed to hold off on recommending any expenditures for this at this time until other less expensive maintenance options for that section can be considered.
10. **Knotweed Eradication:** We still need to develop and file a formal and yearly operational plan with the State prior to the optimal time to eliminate the knotweed which is August. Katherine has agreed to develop the plan for the Committee and Steve Shephard of the Cons-Comm has agreed to work with Katherine on this.
11. **Traffic Study update:** The Topsfield Highway Department will install traffic counters on U.S. route 1 in the springtime once there is no threat of snow. The device will need to be placed in one or more locations for a 3 day period. This data will be evaluated by Bill Bent, a retired Mass Highway engineer.
12. **National Grid update:** Joe said a meeting is being scheduled with National Grid and representatives of Topsfield, Boxford, Georgetown and Newbury to advance the lease/license for that section of the Border to Boston Trail.
13. **Wenham update:** The Selectmen were asked to send a letter to the MBTA to allow them to dispose of the rails. This is the first step to allowing Iron Horse Preservation Society to remove the rails and ties on their 1.7 miles of trail.
14. **Wakefield and Lynnfield update:** The two towns received a \$500k appropriation from the State to design their rail trail. Their state representatives and senators were very helpful in the process to acquire the funding.
15. **Thank You banner:** Dave unfurled a large 12 foot by 3 foot colorful 'Thank You' banner. At an upcoming weekend trail work party the committee, Friends and families will pose for a picture with the banner along the trail and we'll send the picture on a card

to all the funding agencies, the many individuals and organizations who have helped or facilitated the development of the trial in Topsfield.

Meeting adjourned at 10:45 pm after the third blackout and the fire department arriving at the library and informing us that the electricity would not be coming back on because of a tree that came down out front. Everyone went home to bail out their basements.

Respectfully submitted, Dave Read