

# Trail critic wants to join committee

**By Brendan Lewis**

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One Topsfield citizen active in expressing concerns toward a bike-path proposed to run through the town is vying for a seat on the very committee he and others have criticized.

Coalition for Neighborhood Information Spokesman Bob Morgan requested to join the Topsfield Rail Trail Committee, a group charged with planning a four-mile bike track through Topsfield that may eventually become one section of a 20-mile trail.

“[With me] being involved with the Rail Trail Committee, it will help the rail trail,” Morgan said “...because we can ensure that everybody in town know will the positive and negatives.”

At a Feb. 4 selectmen’s meeting, suggestions were made for Morgan to join the committee, so the coalition doesn’t use up the selectmen’s time, as each discussion has run at least 90 minutes, the four times they were in attendance.

At Monday’s selectmen meeting, the board members acknowledged the request to serve on the committee but did not elaborate on how exactly it would be done.

“It appears he (Morgan) is going to try to work with the Rail Trail Committee,” Chairman John McArdle said about the request at the meeting Monday night.

Morgan and other members of the coalition have been critical of the committee at selectmen’s meetings in the past, saying that Rail Trail Committee members have been ignoring adverse effects of the bike path, which would be built over an abandoned rail way.

“We are just common citizens. All of us are interested in doing what is right,” Morgan said about the intentions of the coalition.

At this point, the Rail Trail Committee has received the request to be appointed and will begin the process with Morgan, which involves the coalition member elaborating on why he will be a positive addition to the committee.

Meanwhile, a debate has been scheduled for Monday, March 24 at the Proctor Elementary School Library between members of the Topsfield Rail Trail Committee, and members from the Coalition for Neighborhood Information, which will focus around the merits of the trail.

When asked whether his appointment to the Rail Trail Committee could conflict with the debate, Morgan said he didn’t think so since it’s likely he wouldn’t be appointed by the time the question-and-answer session takes places.

“It is not clear that I will be the major speaker,” Morgan said. “There are a number of people who are very concerned what is going on, not just me.”