

Taunton River Trail Committee

Summary of the Meeting of March 26, 2013

Held at the Boyden Center, 1298 Cohannet Street, Taunton, MA

(Please mark your calendars: The next meeting of the Trail Committee will be held on Tuesday, April 23rd, at 10:00 am at the Boyden Center).

Present:

Shaun Provencher, MA Department of Conservation and Recreation
Charles Tracy, National Park Service
Richard Shafer, Taunton River Watershed Alliance
William Napolitano, Southeast Regional Planning and Economic Development District
Scott McFaden, Wildlands Trust
Priscilla Chapman, Mass Audubon
Carolyn LaMarre, Taunton River Watershed Alliance
Ronald Medeiros, landowner
Ariel Burgess, Wildlands Trust
Alfred Lima, Taunton River Watershed Alliance

Adam Recchia has taken a new position with a consulting firm in Washington, DC. Adam was very helpful to the committee and we wish him well in his new venture. Jackie Schmidt of SRPEDD will be taking Adam's place on the committee.

Discussion topics

Outstanding information for the kiosks: The kiosk designs look great. Photos are needed for the Somerset and Taunton kiosks.

Follow-up: Al Lima will get photos of Hood Shipyard clipper ships from the Somerset Historical Society and photos of the Weir ships from Charles Crowley.

Taunton commitment on the 25% design work for the TMLP section of the ROW: This will require a financial commitment from the City of Taunton.

Follow-up: Al will contact Mike Horrigan from the Taunton Municipal Light Plant to schedule a meeting with Mayor Hoye to discuss the issue and how to proceed.

Dighton bike route: Bill Napolitano, Adam Recchia and Al Lima met with Tom Perry, Dighton Highway Superintendent, on March 13th. Mr. Perry was supportive of the trail initiative and suggested that we meet with the Board of Selectmen to get their approval.

Follow-up: Bill, Al and Jacki Schmidt will be meeting with the Board of Selectmen on April 3rd.

Taunton River Greenway: Shaun Provencher noted that the NE Capital property on the river in Dighton is actually owned by the US Small Business Administration, taken by them for a loan in default. The SBA and the RI Attorney General are in discussion about the disposition of the property.

Dighton town-owned properties are being disposed of by the town. An inventory of these parcels needs to be conducted to determine which should be reserved for the greenway.

The City of Taunton owns considerable property above the Weir in the vicinity of the Taunton High School. Dick Schafer noted that the City has a large inventory of conservation land and it doesn't seem to be interested in adding to it at this time of tight budgets. One option might be to place conservation easements on existing City-owned land that would protect the river and allow a recreational path. We need an inventory of City-owned parcels to begin an analysis of options.

Follow-up: Ariel Burgess will research what parcels the Town of Dighton owns along the trail and their current status. Ariel will also research what parcels are owned by the City of Taunton along the river and for what purpose they are currently being used. The Taunton map will then be brought to the meeting with the mayor in late April to open a dialogue on the issue of easements.

Funding for the 25% design work for the ROW owned by DCR: Charlie Tracy was contacted by DCR staff to discuss how the progress on the DCR portion of the rail trail could be expedited. This contact seems to have been the result of the application to the recreational trails program prepared by Charlie for the National Park Service. DCR staff asked how the NPS could assist in getting the project off the ground. Some interest in the Iron Horse option was expressed by DCR.

Follow-up: Charlie will be walking the DCR ROW this week with Jamie Fosburgh of the NPS to take photos and assess the trail. They will later meet with DCR staff to report on their findings.

June 15th is date of kiosk and route dedication event: It was decided that Saturday, June 15th would be the date of the dedication of the kiosks at Sweet's Knoll (and indirectly for the other three sites, although June 1st is the date of the Taunton River Festival at Weir Park), the dedication of the bike routes in Somerset and Dighton (the route in Taunton will be on Route 138), and a bike ride from Fall River to Sweet's Knoll and a bike ride from Taunton to the same site. The new Taunton River Trail brochure will also be distributed at the event. DCR Commissioner Ed Lambert said that this date would be available for him to attend the event.

Follow-up: Al will check with DCR's Permitting Office to complete an application to use the park that day. He will also determine if this event could also include the dedication of the Sweet's Knoll State Park, since it is uncertain if the park has yet been officially dedicated.

Save the date notices should go out to invitees, including DCR officials, municipal officials, state representatives, Wildlands Trust, National Park Service, foundations, the Wild and Scenic Taunton River Stewardship Council, the Public Access Board, SRPEDD, Ron Medeiros, TRWA board, and other members of the Taunton River Campaign.

Integrating the trail at the Taunton High School: The committee received correspondence from Wyatt Clifford, a teacher and cross-country coach at the Taunton High School, who had seen the article on the TRT in Sunday's edition of the Taunton Gazette. He asked if the trail that the school created for cross-country training could be integrated into the Taunton River Trail. This concept has great possibilities.

Follow-up: Al will contact Mr. Clifford to learn more about the school's trail and how the school and the committee might cooperate to integrate the existing recreational trail at the high school into the larger Taunton River Trail concept.

Shove's Neck special permit in Berkley: It appears that the Berkley Board of Selectmen intend to approve this development even though the legal access to the site seems in doubt. A priority habitat review will need to be conducted. A new filing will have to be made with the Conservation Commission.

Follow-up: Priscilla Chapman will continue to monitor this development to assure that the Board of Selectmen follow through on environmental issues that have been raised in her letter to the board from Mass Audubon and TRWA.

Article on the Taunton River Trail: An excellent article on the trail initiative appeared in the Sunday, March 24th edition of the Taunton Gazette. A companion article on the South Coast Bikeway also appeared on the same day in the Fall River Herald News.

Other business: Karl Pastore is the new SE regional manager for the DCR.