

Taunton River Trail Committee

Summary of the Meeting of October 25, 2011

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, November 22nd at 10:00 am at the Boyden Center. Committee meetings are held on the fourth Tuesday of the month at 10:00 am at the Boyden Center.)

Present:

Shaun Provencher, MA Department of Conservation and Recreation
Carolyn LaMarre, Taunton River Watershed Alliance
Priscilla Chapman, Mass Audubon
Ronald Medeiros, landowner
Alfred Lima, Taunton River Watershed Alliance

Main Points of Discussion:

- **Taunton Municipal Light Plant board approves use of their land:** Great news! Michael Horrigan, General Manager of the Taunton Municipal Light Plant, said that the board of directors of the TMLP have agreed to allow a bike path on TMLP property, both on the old rail bed right-of-way and on its main property where plant security requires a detour. This is excellent news. It means that the combined right-of-way of DCR property and TMLP property will result in over five miles of bikepath/recreational trail. Mr. Horrigan suggested that the next step should be the laying out of a preliminary route, particularly where the path has to detour off of the old rail bed. He suggested that we review the route proposed in the 1994 SRPEDD plan as a starting point.
- **DCR Lands Committee approves acquisition of the NE Capital property:** More good news! Shaun Provencher submitted the NE Capital property to the October meeting of the DCR Lands Committee, and “it passed with flying colors.” The parcel fronts on the Taunton River on the southern edge of the Sweet’s Knoll property. Shaun said that the next step will be to conduct appraisals on the property. The estate owes a considerable amount in back taxes to the Town of Dighton, but the attorney for the estate is willing to work with DCR to make the sale happen.

The Lands Committee wasn’t able to take up the consideration of the Medeiros ROW parcels to the south of the Sweet’s Knoll ROW land, but it will do so at its next meeting.

- **Somerset contacts positive:** Still more good news! Al Lima contacted Dennis Lattrell, Town Administrator for the Town of Somerset, to acquaint him with the work of the Taunton River Trail Committee. Mr. Lattrell was quite positive about the prospects of the trail proceeding through the town and connecting with the planning for the Slades Ferry Crossing development and the new bikepath on the Veterans Memorial Bridge. He noted that the town is working with the Town of Swansea on a bike route on Route 103 that would link with the bikepath in the Town of Warren, Rhode Island. He also noted other routes in Somerset that are shown on SRPEDD's Regional Bikeways Plan. He would like to be kept in the loop.
- **Connection to Fall River established:** And even more good news! The Veterans Memorial Bridge was officially opened on September 11th. The new bridge includes an excellent dedicated bikepath that was officially opened later in October, when temporary railings were installed. This new bikepath over the Taunton River now provides a safe connection to Fall River and beyond. It will also be the point where the north-south Taunton River Trail and the east-west Provincetown to Providence Trail will intersect.
- **Aquaria rights-of-way:** Al Lima spoke with Alfredo Andes of Aquaria on the possible use of their rights-of-way for a bikepath. Mr. Andes said that Aquaria only owns rights-of-way, not the underlying property. We would therefore have to negotiate with the owners of these underlying properties if we wanted to follow the same route. Most of Aquaria's easements are on town or state roads, particularly Route 138.
- **Linking the Gateway Cities:** Ed Lambert is interested in how the Taunton River Trail could link two or more Gateway Cities. There are five Gateway Cities in southeastern Massachusetts, and the Taunton River Trail could be a key to linking all five of these cities: New Bedford, Fall River, Taunton, Brockton and Attleboro. Brockton is a special challenge. Carolyn LaMarre suggested that we take a closer look at the Aquaria route as the way to connect with Brockton. Given that Aquaria currently has an easement that is laid out and used, it might make it easier and less costly to overlay another easement over the existing one. Since Brockton is in the Old Colony regional planning district, we need to contact Old Colony to get them involved.
- **Missing link between the DCR and TMLP ROW:** There are three small parcels of rights-of-way between the DCR and TMLP holdings. The largest is owned by the successor to Princess House, another is the Aquaria land and a third is owned by a Sammy Pine or his heirs. Carolyn LaMarre offered to research who owns each parcel so that we might contact them about a bikepath crossing their land. Ron Medeiros has survey plans for these parcels and will bring them to the next meeting.

- **Three Mile River Greenway:** Bill Napolitano was to have given a presentation about the effort to realize the current ACEC on the Three Mile River in Taunton, Dighton and Norton and how that could influence the creation of a greenway along the river; however, he couldn't attend the meeting. We discussed who would be the best persons in Taunton to involve in advancing the concept of the Three Mile River Greenway. Carol of TRWA gave Al the names of two Taunton advocates that could assist in this effort.
- **Segregansett River Greenway:** The Trail Committee's plan of protected land along the Segregansett River in Dighton doesn't show additional land that is in public ownership, such as land owned by the Town of Somerset where its wells are located. Ron also mentioned that there are many parcels along the river that are of "unknown" ownership. He said that Bill Napolitano should have information on the Somerset and other holdings of interest in creating a greenway. Kelly Whitmore of TTOR suggested that Ellen Litvack would be a good contact for this; Ellen is on the Dighton Open Space Plan and CPA Committee.
- **Meeting with the DCR Planning Office:** As suggested by Ed Lambert, Al contacted Dan Driscoll in the DCR Planning Office to schedule a meeting between the Trail Committee and planning staff. Dan said that he will contact the right people to be at the meeting and will get back to Al.
- **History along the Taunton River:** Ron suggested that we Google "Sweet's Knoll" to review the historical documents available there. One document describes the archaeology along the Taunton River in Dighton and another 1955 news article speaks about the historical use of the property. Shaun noted that there may be an archaeological site in the area of the NE Capital parcel, and he has asked the Mass Historical Commission to research it, which they are doing.

Follow-up tasks:

- Mike Horrigan and Craig Foley will work with TMLP staff in reviewing the layout of the trail route proposed in the 1994 plan. Bill Napolitano will be asked to bring to the committee's November meeting that portion of the plan to review.
- Shaun Provencher will follow up with the attorney for the NE Capital property about the required procedures needed to move towards acquisition of the parcel, including appraisals.
- Shaun will also bring the Medeiros parcels to the Lands Committee for their consideration when they have space on their agenda.
- Adam Recchia will be asked to bring to the committee's November meeting a map of the Aquaria route, so we will have it on file to use in assessing the route for a bikepath and how it would connect with existing and proposed greenways.

- Carolyn LaMarre will research the ownership of the three parcels between the DCR and TMLP holdings along the rail line for the November meeting.
- Ron Medeiros will bring the plans for these three parcels to the next meeting.
- Al Lima will contact the two persons in Taunton identified by Carol who could assist in advancing the concept of the Three Mile River Greenway.
- Al will also contact Ellen Litvack in Dighton to open a dialogue on a greenway for the Segregansett River.
- Bill will be asked for information on parcels on the Segregansett owned by the Town of Somerset and by others.
- Al will also follow up with Dan Driscoll on scheduling a meeting between the Trail Committee and DCR planning staff.