

# Taunton River Trail Committee

## Summary of the Meeting of November 22, 2011

(No December meeting was held)

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, January 24th 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:

Michael Horrigan, Taunton Municipal Light Plant  
Ronald Medeiros, Landowner  
Shaun Provencher, MA Department of Conservation and Recreation  
Daniel O'Brien, MA Department of Conservation and Recreation  
William Napolitano, Southeastern Regional Planning & Economic Development District  
Tim Mello, MA Department of Conservation and Recreation  
Adam Recchia, Southeastern Regional Planning & Economic Development District  
Alfred Lima, Taunton River Watershed Alliance

### Main Points of Discussion:

- **Taunton Municipal Light Plant ROW:** Discussion centered around the route that the bike path would take on the TMLP ROW. Mike Horrigan noted that the TMLP would have no problem with siting the bike path on the ROW north and south of the main plant property, but it would have to veer off the ROW to avoid the main site. The course would therefore proceed north from the Three Mile River at the Dighton-Taunton corporate boundary to Railroad Avenue, up to Route 138, down Baker Road and back on to the ROW north of the main TMLP site. It would then continue to the back of Rye's Aluminum, where the ROW changes to DOT ownership.

Mr. Horrigan added that the TMLP also owns the ROW that proceeds west from the main line to Warner Boulevard, and that could also be used for a bike path.

Where TMLP owns the ROW, EOTC has an easement that allows rail use. Where EOTC owns the ROW, TMLP has an easement to use the ROW. We would need to get approval from EOTC to use the ROW, whether EOTC owned the ROW outright or whether it had an easement on it. Aquaria had to go through this process for the placement of its water line in the ROW.

Some discussion centered on whether the bikepath could avoid using Route 138 by proceeding up the ROW and veering off on the main TMLP site and back on to the ROW. This alternative seemed uncertain, since TMLP plans for the main site are still under study, and some of the options being considered would make it difficult to site the bike path on the main site. For the time being, the Route 138 detour seems the preferred option.

We also discussed the role of the approved subdivision north of the TMLP main site (owned by Antonio Barrows) and how it might be used as an alternative route. One option mentioned was to have a land trust purchase the property, change the plan to a cluster plan, and then place an easement on the open space portion of the cluster subdivision that would allow a bike path.

- **Department of Conservation and Recreation ROW:** Danny O'Brien suggested that we speak with Joe Orfant, Chief of the DCR Bureau of Planning and Resource Protection, about initiating work on the ROW owned by DCR. A decision needs to be made on whether the surface will be bituminous concrete or a soft surface. Danny mentioned that a hard-packed soft surface at the Wampatuck State Park in Cohasset is quite effective and accommodates most recreational uses except roller-blading; he suggested that we take a look at it before we make a decision on the issue.
- **Medeiros parcels:** Shaun Provencher said that the Medeiros ROW parcels were presented to the Lands Committee in November. The Lands Committee decided not to follow up on acquiring the parcels, in part because other on-road options existed that paralleled these parcels.
- **NE Capital parcel:** Shaun mentioned that the Environmental Site Assessment would be completed shortly. Nothing in the assessment is expected to prevent the acquisition by DCR. In addition, the appraisal came in and supported the numbers that DCR expected. Shaun said that DCR will likely make an offer as soon as the assessment is submitted.
- **Greenways on the Three Mile and Segregansett Rivers:** Bill Napolitano mentioned that the ACEC on the Three-Mile River extends from Norton through Taunton to North Dighton. The Rivers Act protects 200 feet on either side of the river. Bill added that both the Taunton and Dighton open space plans are up for renewal. Taunton's plan expires this year and Dighton's expired in 2010.
- **The connection to Brockton:** Since Aquaria has rights-of-way from the Weir in Taunton to Brockton---mostly on town and city roads---it would appear that "piggy-backing" a bike path easement on their easement might be the best alternative to reach Brockton. We also need to start coordinating with the Old Colony Regional Planning District on the Brockton connection.

- **Other ownerships between DCR and TMLP ROW's:** There are at least four 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 and fourth are owned by a Samuel Pine or his heirs. Ron Medeiros mentioned that Samuel Pine lives on an abutting parcel and suggested that we contact him. A Google map showed that there are no major structures on the water side of the ROW, possibly making it feasible to use the ROW in that location for a bike path.
- **DOT ownership north of the TMLP ROW:** The DOT appears to own rights-of-way north of the TMLP holdings to the Weir. Little is known of what the DOT intends to do with these parcels. We need to follow up.
- **Bus trip for elected officials:** Danny O'Brien mentioned that local and state elected officials were given a boat and bus tour of the Taunton River a few years ago to view various sites that were under consideration for acquisition. He suggested that a bus trip might be valuable in acquainting elected officials with the Taunton River Trail concept.

#### **Follow-up tasks:**

- Adam Recchia will provide the committee with the steps that we will need to take to initiate that portion of the ROW in the City of Taunton.
- Al Lima will check with DCR on getting a meeting with their planning staff with the objective of initiating planning efforts on DCR's portion of the ROW.
- Al will contact Ellen Bidlack in Dighton and Bill will contact Maryan Nowak in Taunton to acquaint them with the greenway concepts, to welcome them to join the committee and to coordinate their communities' open space planning efforts with those of the Taunton River Trail Committee. Al will also contact town manager Dennis Latrell in Somerset on the Taunton River Greenway concept.
- Al will contact Mass DOT on their intentions related to the ROW that they own between the TMLP ownership and the Weir.
- Al will contact Scott McFaden at Wildlands Trust to discuss options for placing a bike path on the Barrows' subdivision north of the main site of the TMLP.
- The Old Colony Planning Council will be contacted to determine the status of their bikeways planning and their connectors in the Taunton River Watershed.