

# Taunton River Trail Committee

## Summary of the Meeting of February 28, 2012

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, March 27, 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:

Scott MacFaden, Wildlands Trust

Ronald Medeiros, Landowner

Roy Edwards, Taunton River canoe and kayak rentals

William Napolitano, Southeastern Regional Planning & Economic Development District

Adam Recchia, Southeastern Regional Planning & Economic Development District

Alfred Lima, Taunton River Watershed Alliance

### Main Points of Discussion:

**Meeting with Department of Conservation and Recreation planning staff:** The goal of this meeting, held on February 13, 2012, was to acquaint the DCR Planning Office staff with the Taunton River Trail project, to become acquainted with DCR's planning process and to get a sense of how the Taunton River Trail Committee can be an effective advocate in getting the trail project initiated.

Present at the meeting were Joe Orfant, Dan Driscoll, Paul Jahnige, Shaun Provencher, and Dan O'Brien of DCR, Jamie Fosburgh and Charles Tracy of the National Park Service and Al Lima.

DCR staff said that all the actors need to *define a clear path of where we want to go*. What will DCR's role be in this process? It needs to be defined. They said that they can't do this project on a piecemeal basis. DCR staff will also need to get policy approval from the Lands Committee and the Commissioner. Staff said that the Taunton River Trail Committee could be most effective in getting the various actors to the table.

This project needs to make sense within the context of DCR's overall mission and what the agency wants to accomplish. DCR's piece of this project needs to be somewhat self-contained.

DCR staff said that the first priority should be to develop a memo of understanding between the Lands Committee and the agencies comprising the Taunton River Trail Committee on the policy of what we want to do. What would be DCR's responsibilities? Who would be the partners? What is the larger goal and what would be the stages of implementation? We need this MOU to give the project "legs" and legitimacy.

Staff also said that there are two projects within this one project: (1) an implementation piece; and (2) an acquisition piece. These are distinctly different processes with different needs.

While we plan for the long-term plan, however, we also need short-term goals that fit into budgetary timeframes.

Given the various ownerships of the rail trail ROW, DCR will need a maintenance agreement. How will the trail be maintained? Will there be trailhead facilities? Parking?

National Park Service representatives suggested that we should think of the project as more than a trail. It is actually water connections, destinations, etc.

There was some concern among DCR staff about the off-road rail trails emptying out on to on-road bike routes. For safety considerations, they would prefer designated areas for bikes, such as bike lanes.

The project needs to be designed first, followed by funding for construction. Since DCR's in-house resources are limited, the design work will require consulting assistance and therefore funding in the amount of about \$200,000. If the Taunton River Trail Committee wants to initiate the design process, it should begin discussions with Commissioner Lambert and local state representatives. Funding will need to be put in the DCR budget for designing and permitting the project.

DCR staff made it clear that DCR is committed to a rail trail construction process that is conducted properly, including procurement, permitting and construction. This includes following DEP's best management practices, abutter meetings, and proper permitting. The rails will be removed, followed by the removal of contaminants. Crossings will have to be designed and constructed correctly. DCR will have to do the up-front activities.

**Meeting with Taunton representative:** Al met with Kevin Shea, Executive Director of the City of Taunton Office of Economic Community Development, on February 2<sup>nd</sup> to acquaint him with the TR Trail project. Kevin and his family are avid bicyclists and he said that he would prepare the pre-application to SRPEDD for Enhancements funding. He particularly liked the idea of creating a connection to Warner Boulevard and the Boyden Conservation Area through the ROW on the Three-Mile River.

**Meeting with the Dighton representatives:** On February 27<sup>th</sup>, Al met with the Dighton Community Preservation Committee to discuss the trail plan. They were quite receptive and recommended that we meet with the Board of Selectmen. The Selectmen are

interested in preparing a master plan for the town, and the trail/greenway concept would be appropriate to include in the plan.

**Somerset Taunton River waterfront parcels:** Scott MacFaden contacted Jim Mercer, one of the owners of the parcels on Riverside Avenue south of the old Brightman Street Bridge. Mr. Mercer appears willing to sell. The other owner of a long riverfront parcel further south on Riverside Avenue told Scott that he is not willing to entertain selling at this time.

**Princess House parcel:** The new owners have not responded to our request to meet to discuss the use of their ROW, situated just south of the Three-Mile River. Ron Medeiros will speak with local people to determine who the contact is for the new owner. Scott also works with a title expert who can also research the owners.

**Subdivision parcel north of the TMLP main site:** Ron has been in contact with the owner of this parcel concerning leasing solar panels on the land for a period of 20 years, including allowing a ROW for a bike path. This would allow the detour on 138 around the Cleary TMLP site to be shortened considerably.

**Iron Horse work in Rockland:** Scott related that the preparation of the recreational trail in Rockland by Iron Horse Preservation has progressed well. The pile of RR ties are gone. Scott will bring pictures of the work to the next meeting.

**DOT ROW:** We haven't heard back from the RR division of DOT. Adam will provide Al with other names at DOT that can be contacted related to the status of the inactive ROW between the TMLP section and the Weir junction.

**Regional meeting:** Ron mentioned that it might be time to have a regional meeting at Bristol Aggie to get all of the actors together and to give the trail effort an official kick-off. We will discuss at the next meeting.

**Berkley section of the greenway:** Berkley now has a standing Open Space Committee. Some of the land along the Berkley Taunton River shore has been purchased by DCR. We may want to involve Berkley in our deliberations.

**Another name for the trail?:** An issue was raised about the broad scope of the name of the Taunton River Trail and that we can't speak for all of the river upstream. We'll take up this issue at the next meeting.

**Follow-up tasks:**

- Al will schedule meetings with Rep. Patricia Haddad and Senator Marc Pacheco to discuss possible funding to begin preliminary design work and permitting for the DCR section of the rail trail.
- Scott will schedule a meeting with Mr. Mercer related to the Somerset riverfront parcel.

- Al will schedule meetings with the Mayor of Taunton and the Dighton Board of Selectmen.
- Ron will check with local individuals to determine how to contact the new owner of the Princess House parcel. Scott will also follow up with his title examiner.
- Al will contact DOT staff referred to him by Adam Recchia.