

Taunton River Trail Committee

Summary of the Meeting of June 26, 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, July 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.)

Discussion topics

Bike routes: We discussed implementing bike routes along the Taunton River Trail and, subject to confirmations with the municipalities and agencies involved, we arrived at the following schedule:

October, 2012: Official opening of the Taunton River Trail bike route in the Town of Somerset. The opening will include other bike routes that lead to the East Bay Bikepath in Rhode Island. Projected date for the opening is either the 13th or 20th of October. The opening ceremony will be accompanied by a regional bike ride organized by Adam Recchia of SRPEDD.

May, 2013: Official opening of the Taunton River Trail bike route in the Town of Dighton. The opening ceremony will include a regional bike ride.

October, 2013: Official opening of the Taunton River Trail bike route in the City of Taunton. The opening ceremony will include a regional bike ride.

October, 2014: Official opening of the completed off-road bike path along the ROW owned by the Department of Conservation and Recreation and the Taunton Municipal Light Plant, among others. This date would coincide with the 150th anniversary of Taunton becoming a city. The opening ceremony will be accompanied by a regional bike ride. This is rather an aggressive schedule for the design, permitting and construction of the bike path; however, if funds become available in FY 2013 for the 25% design of the path, the schedule could be met.

TMLP ROW use agreement: This issue will be discussed at the July meeting. Mike Horrigan, general manager of the TMLP, did say that the TMLP is receptive to granting an easement for the bike path from the Three Mile River to Railroad Avenue only if it was part of a larger path system that made a continuous trail.

National Park Service grant: Lee Steppacher of the NPS said that the \$10,000 grant would be used to design and construct four interpretive panels for four sites: (1) Riverfront Park at the Weir in Taunton; (2) Sweet's Knoll; (3) Dighton Rock State Park; and (4) Somerset's Waterfront Park. NPS will be hiring a designer and working with the Taunton Wild and Scenic River Stewardship Council and the Taunton River Trail Committee on the project.

Somerset bike route: Bill Napolitano and Al Lima met with the Somerset Board of Selectmen on June 13th to discuss bikeways in that town. The BOS authorized representatives of the Taunton River Trail Committee to meet with Tom Fitzgerald, the Somerset DPW director, to begin the process of realizing (and re-establishing) bike routes in the town. It appears that only new signs and occasional stenciling will be needed to create the routes. An article on the meeting appeared in the Somerset Spectator. Bill and Al will follow up on that meeting. The target date for dedicating the routes is either October 13th or 20th, 2012.

Observations on the May 30th bike regional bike ride: The first observation is the total lack of historical interpretation along the Taunton River, except for the new Berkley Bridge park. The second observation is that bikeways need to be planned as a series of loops that bring cyclists back to their point of origin. Also, Route 138 south of Center Street presents challenges for bike riders. Coordination is also needed with area museums to maximize the biking experience.

Forum in August: This forum would be oriented to area legislators to acquaint them with the issues related to realizing the Taunton River Trail, including funding. We would discuss what we are doing, where we want to go, and how they can help us get there. Possible venues are Bristol Aggie or the Somerset Historical Society. A Friday would be a preferred day of the week, when legislators are in their districts. Bill will investigate if and when we could use a boat from Save the Bay to provide a tour of the river for the legislators following the forum. Ron Medeiros will check on alternative landing sites and on the influence of the tides on scheduling a ride.

Other business: Ron reported that the solar panel field project will not materialize. This project would have been on a parcel that could have given the bike path access to the ROW from Route 138