

TOWN OF MIDDLETON
Rails to Trails Advisory Committee ("MRTAC")
Minutes of meeting – 27 September 2012
Howes-Manning School -7 PM

Present: Scott Cameron, Derek Fullerton, Matt Greenfield, Hector Quarti, Frank Twiss, Rodney Pendleton, Todd Moreschi, Thomas Martinuk, Leo Jones, John Shawmut, Scott Downs (part time)
Absent: Brad Swanson, Steve Weitzler, Stephen Friend

Derek Fullerton, appointed Committee Chair by the Middleton Board of Selectmen, opened the meeting by greeting the attendees and distributing a package of documents containing information of general nature related to the committee's assigned tasks as defined in the following Board of Selectmen's resolution. Quote:

“Purpose: This article authorizes the Board of Selectmen to appoint a committee to initiate a feasibility study for creating a rails to trails pedestrian way along the former Essex Railway section within Middleton (approximately 5 miles). The committee will conduct a preliminary assessment of the railway and associated parameters and report recommendations to the Board of Selectmen that will outline action steps for the community to implement a pedestrian way that will benefit the community in ways of, but not limited to, public health, recreational and safer physical activity opportunities, economic and transportation benefits, community pride and identity, and preservation of historical and cultural resources”

After the attendees introduced themselves, and by unanimous decision, Derek Fullerton was confirmed as Committee Chair, Scott Cameron elected Vice-Chair (pending official appointment by the Selectmen), and Hector Quarti as Secretary.

It was decided to meet once a month at 7 PM, tentatively on the first Monday of each month, at a location to be determined for each case.

With the help of aerial views and photos, Derek gave a general visual description of the trail intended route that mostly follows the right-of-way of the old Essex Railway.

The route extends from the North Andover town line on Sharpner Road and runs southeasterly through Middleton and across the Danvers town line behind the Essex Agricultural School, approximately at Prentiss Road extension, ending on Route 1 South. The extent of limits for this committee will be within the town limits of Middleton.

With an approximate length of 5 miles, the trail would affect or impinge on property owned by various parties, such as the National Grid Corporation along a larger portion of its length, the Town of Danvers at the trail South end, and others.

The all-important subject of potential cost of the project came up. Preliminary feedback from various private and public sources indicated that it could cost as low as \$30,000 per mile of trail to as high as 1 million/mile. It was decided to temporarily table this subject, both within the Committee and outside of it, until firmer data becomes available.

Two important decisions were made. The Committee is to assume that the final products of its work would feature: 1) a “multi-purpose trail” suitable for walking,

hiking, bicycling, and roller-skating. This requirement entails that the trail would be of adequate width and properly leveled and paved; and 2) the project execution would be planned, financed, and carried out in one overall phase.

Work should start ASAP in identifying property owners who may have a say on the feasibility, scope, schedule, and characteristics of the project. National Grid, the Town of Danvers, private abutters, neighbors, etc, must be informed at some point in time so they can provide valuable input that can (and in all like hood will) affect the Committee's work and its decision making process.

Another identified actionable item was establishing contact with neighboring towns that have gone through this process, some of them quite recently. Contacts could be initiated by Middleton Officials and by Committee members.

Presently, the goal of the Committee is to carry out assessment of the trail way and develop a preliminary report to present at the next Town Meeting which could include a request (warrant article) for funding to complete a engineering study and cost analysis.

October 13th was chosen as "walk-the-trail-day" by Committee members. Departing point is at Farmers Brown on Route 62 at 7 AM. In case of bad weather or any other problem, the alternate date is October 20. Same time and meeting point.

Looking forward to next meeting, one of the agenda items will be to identify and list the tasks that we consider to be the most urgent and actionable. After this list is prepared, teams of 2 or 3 Committee members will be set-up and the tasks will be assigned to each of them.

Having covered all the agenda items, the motion to adjourn was made and approved at about 8:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Hector Quarti
Secretary