



CONSERVATION COMMISSION  
AND  
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION

JOINT PUBLIC MEETING TO DISCUSS  
THE RAIL TRAIL MASTER PLAN  
Tuesday, September 12, 2017, 6:00 p.m.  
Visitor Center, 14 North Street

MINUTES  
Approved 9/21/2017

Mr. Dickerman called the meeting to order at 6:03 PM.

**Present:** Gary Dickerman, Steve Wood, Kim Gogan, Eileen Skowronski

**Absent:** Scott Magnuson, Nick Koloski

**Parks & Recreation Commission Members:** Jeff Coburn, Bill Carpenter, Jim Feleen, Mark Brislin

Mr. Dickerman opened the meeting by explaining that its purpose was to discuss the rail trail master plan. A great deal of work has already been done toward creating a long-range plan, and the Commission would like to finish it. This meeting was called to solicit input from the Parks and Recreation Commission for the plan.

Mr. Feleen said earlier master planning activities had been well-attended, although primarily by ATV enthusiasts. He said he thought he saw a consensus emerging that the community as a whole wanted the trail to be developed as a recreational asset. However, use of the trail by (motorized) wheeled vehicles was challenged and ultimately denied. The City applied for a waiver, but it was denied. So, for now the presumption is that wheeled vehicles are not allowed on the City-owned portion of the trail. Focusing on use of the trail by the non-motorized users – pedestrians, bicycles, strollers, etc. – how best to find funding, resources and energy to care for the trail is where we are now.

The East Street project will be helpful in developing cost estimates for projects on other parts of the trail. A special surface material will be used on this portion of the trail. The Commission is interested in seeing what it's like.

Mr. Carpenter said he would like to increase the number of people using the trail.

Ms. Gogan said she would like to see the trail connect to other parts of town, e.g. the Historic District.

Mr. Dickerman said the Conservation Commission sees itself as guardians of the natural resources that border the trail. Beyond that, they weren't sure. Mr. Feleen said that there are wetlands and river frontage that the Commission should be taking care of. He said he would like to see the health of the wetlands restored and a system of boardwalks through them connecting to Monadnock Park.

Mr. Carpenter said he would like to see this trail become the best trail in the country.

The question of surveying the trail came up. Mr. Dickerman said two estimates on the cost were quite high. Mr. Carpenter said the need for a survey should be in the master plan to facilitate grant applications. It was unclear if a survey is necessary at this time, other than perhaps in the areas of significant encroachment. It was unclear where the need for a survey came from originally.

Mr. Carpenter asked who is responsible for maintaining the trail into the future. Mr. Brislin said his department gets called about downed trees. He said the Planning and Development Department doesn't have the money or manpower. There was no clear answer to the question.

Mr. Carpenter said he would like to see a single group be created with the responsibility of caring for the trail. Mr. Feleen suggested creating a non-profit group such as the group that oversees the rail trail in Keene. That group raises funds and oversees all aspects of the trail. Mr. Feleen offered to get more information about the Keen rail trail group.

Visions for the trail suggested by participants included:

- Connectivity to other trails and amenities
- Multi-user surface
- Landscaping –
  - for aesthetic reasons at various points along the trail
  - to provide separation between the trail and Washington Street
  - ensuring the grass is cut regularly where needed
  - adding planters and benches in the open stretches
  - Cleaning up the vegetation and restoring the trail surface in the area between Chestnut Street and the bridge
- Lighting
- Shelter structures with picnic benches
- Adding exercise equipment along the trail

Mr. Feleen suggested viewing the trail as a long, narrow park.

Ms. Gogan said that many people still see the trail as an ATV trail and avoid it. It was agreed that marketing would be necessary to change that perception and increase usage by nonmotorized groups. Mr. Carpenter suggested changing the name to the "Woodman Recreational Trail" as a start.

It was agreed that the meeting had been helpful and productive. The next step is for staff to create the draft plan and distribute it to the two groups for editing.

Mr. Brislin said the High School will be holding its community service day on September 27<sup>th</sup>. The school is looking for projects for the students. It was agreed that they could be directed toward picking up trash along the trail.

The Parks & Recreation Commission members left the meeting.

The Commission needed to reimburse Ms. Skowronski for money spent on materials needed to post the Prohibited Activities signs at The Stevens Brook Conservation area.

**Motion:** To reimburse Ms. Skowronski \$208.84 for materials purchased for posting the prohibited activities signs in the Stevens Brook Conservation area.

**Made by:** Ms. Gogan                      **Second:** Mr. Dickerman

**Vote:** Unanimous in favor

Mr. Dickerman asked the Commission to approve spending \$2000 for the removal of hazard trees in the trail right-of-way.

**Motion:** To authorize expenditure of \$2000 for removal of designated hazard trees on Washington Street and in the section of the trail between the bridge and Chestnut Street conditioned upon receipt of an implementation plan.

**Made by:** Mr. Wood                      **Second:** Ms. Gogan

**Vote:** unanimous in favor

### **Adjournment**

**Motion:** To adjourn the meeting

**Made by:** Mr. Wood                      **Second:** Ms. Skowronski

**Vote:** Unanimous in favor

The meeting adjourned at 7:30 PM.

**Respectfully submitted,**

*de Forest Bearse*