

COCHITUATE RAIL TRAIL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING

February 19, 2020

School Committee Training Room, Natick Town Hall, 3rd Floor

| Name | Affiliation | Present | Absent |
|------------------|--|---------|--------|
| David Camacho | Member at Large (vice chair) | X | |
| Barbara Coco | Member at Large | X | |
| [vacant] | Community and Economic Development | | X |
| Peter Henry | Member at Large | | X |
| Robert Mueller | Member at Large | X | |
| Josh Ostroff | Board of Selectmen Representative (chair) | X | |
| Barbara Sanchez | Recreation and Parks Commission Representative | X | |
| William Schoenig | Member at Large | X | |

Also present: Martin Kessell, Open Space Advisory Committee; Peg Waters, Recreation and Parks Commission; John Gregory, Friends of Natick Trails; Karen Leese, Natick Center Cultural District.

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 P.M., having been posted in accordance with the Open Meeting Law.

1. **Welcome and Introductions:** Committee members introduced themselves. It was noted that several member terms had expired but the committees were continuing to serve, as the Board of Selectmen (BOS) had voted to sunset the committee and had not appointed or reappointed members.
 - a. Josh noted that depending on recommendations of the committee to the BOS regarding its future, and should the BOS change its decision and extend the committee, anyone interested, especially those with expiring/expired terms, should email the BOS of their interest.

2. **Public comment:** No public comment

3. **Construction project update:**

(JO) Noted the committee's last meeting was June of 2019 and there has been significant progress since that time.

- a. Project timetable and milestones
 - Work progress has been consistent but some elements, such as communication to abutters, have not always progressed as expected.

This is likely due to the project being run by the state and its contractor. This may be an opportunity for this committee to help.

- Project progress is significant, it could open late 2020.
- The CRT web page will be updated regularly.

4. Change orders (CO) and status

Two Change Orders are under review.

1. Our committee supported a CO for additional signs, benches and pavers. A quote to the town has been sent (approx. \$60K), and Mass DOT may fund this CO.
2. At the trail edge by the Washington Avenue crossing, a retaining wall in lieu of a banked trail slope is under consideration to increase safety, given vehicles will be in close proximity to the trail edge.
 - a. Barbara Sanchez and Peg Waters commented that Camp Arrowhead will be active from June 29th through August 7th and there could be parking issues given the current state of construction. There is also regular drop off / pick up from route 9 – will that remain available? Will there be access for Emergency vehicles during this time? In reply, Josh suggested a coordinated email with the Recreation and Parks Director to ensure coordination, and will follow up.

5. Trail connections

- a. The Town is working with State entities to connect the CRT and new MBTA station. Opportunities exist to access a MassTrails grant which, if approved, could offset up to ¾ of the design fees. The grant application was submitted in late January.
- b. Estimated timeline for design, may start in summer and last approximately a year – perhaps longer. Ideally, it would be constructed shortly after the station was opened.
- c. Dave Camacho asked if the design include linking to the street level? Josh noted that this is the intent.
- d. Another project would connect the CRT at the Route 9 bridge to Hartford Street. This is a separate project known as Lake Cochituate Path and is under the authority of MassDOT. It's in the early design stages, and will require communication and coordination with abutters.
- e. There are other smaller connections pending.
- f. Martin Kessell of the Open Space Advisory Committee (OSAC), commenting as an individual, noted that the OSAC is currently managing the trails by default. There currently exists a rough connection from the CRT to Pegan Cove, via the so-called North Trail. This is very near federal land. Martin requested future designs

include consideration of this connection. Discussions with Army Labs are recommended to determine proper access / property ownership.

6. Operations and Maintenance Plan

- a. This is an opportunity to help design the “rules of the road”. This could impact staff requests by the town. Josh requested representatives for the committee to coordinate with town. Will Schoenig and Barb Coco volunteered.

7. Friends of Natick Trails update

- a. FONT is considering fundraising ideas such as engraved pavers and bench sponsorships. Timing of offering these is TBD, and FONT is open for input and suggestions. The consensus is that Earth Day is a good time to begin.
- b. A Historical Signage program is also planned, in collaboration with the Natick Historical Society.
- c. Other non-CRT focus of FONT include trail walks, and trails day.
- d. Barb Sanchez and Robert Mueller volunteered to coordinate with FONT.

8. Public art

- a. Mathworks is participating in a grant program under the Foundation for MetroWest that could sponsor public art. The application deadline is 2/28, so submittals within the required timeframe for 2020 are a challenge. The CRT and the Natick Center Cultural District may be able to work together towards a grant. Josh will follow up with Karen Leese, who was present on behalf of the NCCD.
- b. A question was raised about public art and whether that had to be reviewed with other boards and committees before selection, and if that was a role for the CRT committee. Josh noted that there is no current role for the CRT committee to review art, and this was not a submission on behalf of the Town.

9. Future of CRT Advisory Committee

- a. Josh reviewed how In June 2019 the CRT Committee had voted to recommend to the BOS to dissolve the CRT with remaining / future work to be consumed by other committees or boards. The BOS in October voted to support sunsetting the CRT as the new Trails committee was formed. However, the charter of other committees currently in existence, such as the Forest and Trails Stewardship Committee, are focused on topics not completely aligned with the current needs of the CRT project.
- b. Committee discussion focused on: the need for oversight of the project while still in construction. Smaller work must be completed and the current model of distribution of CRT work to other committees has not produced a champion to

ensure completion of this “smaller” work. Ancillary projects will still need to be driven to completion.

- c. Barbara made the motion *“Move to recommend that the Board of Selectmen reconsider its decision to discharge the Cochituate Rail Trail Advisory Committee and continue its current charge with a membership between 7 and 9 members.”* Will seconded the motion, and the committee voted in support by a vote of: 6-0-0.
- d. Will asked if we needed to have a Town staff person as a voting member. After discussion, the previous motion was reconsidered and an amended motion was offered by Robert, seconded by Dave and voted 6-0-0 as follows: *“Move to recommend that the Board of Selectmen reconsider its decision to discharge the Cochituate Rail Trail Advisory Committee and continue its current charge with a membership between 7 and 9 members and suggest the Committee composition not require a town representative or staff member.”*
- e. Further discussion included comments on the plan to demolish the abandoned house near the CRT, the fact that access via Mechanics street was still an open item and with the town, and the need for a formal connection to the CRT from LaGrange Street.

10. Events

Upcoming events include Natick (4/26) and Framingham (4/25) Earth Days. Committee members expressed interest in participating in the Natick Earth day event but not the Framingham event. The committee received an invite to discuss the CRT by Fisk Church on 4/21. JO volunteered to represent the CRT at Fisk Church and FONT indicated their intent to attend as well.

11. Meeting Minutes

Barb Coco moved to approve the 6/18/19 minutes, seconded by Dave Camacho and voted 6-0-0.

12. Future agenda items and new business

The committee will reconvene following action by the Board of Selectmen.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 PM on a motion by Dave Camacho, seconded by Barb Coco and unanimously voted.

Respectfully submitted by William Schoenig