

COCHITUATE RAIL TRAIL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING

May 12, 2020

On Line – Zoom Meeting - Meeting ID: 838-5984-8969

Name	Affiliation	Present	Absent
David Camacho (DC)	Member at Large (vice chair)	X	
Barbara Coco (BC)	Member at Large	X	
Robert Mueller (RM)	Member at Large	X	
Joshua Ostroff (JO)	Board of Selectmen (chair)	X	
Barbara Sanchez (BS)	Recreation and Parks Commission	X	
William Schoenig (WS)	Member at Large	X	
Joel Barrera (JB)	Member at Large	X	
Also present			
Jeremy Marsette (JM)	Director, Department of Public Works		
Michelle Languedoc (ML)	Member at Large (appointed, not sworn in [no vote])		
John Gregory (JG)	Friends of Natick Trails representative		
James Freas (JF)	Director, Community and Economic Development		
Bob Childs	Bacon Street resident		

The meeting was called to order at 7:06 P.M., having been posted in accordance with the Open Meeting Law.

1. Welcome and Introductions:

- Newly appointed committee member Michelle Languedoc introduced herself, as did committee members staff and visitors.

2. Public comment:

- No public comment

3. CRT Advisory Committee status

- In March the Board of Selectmen extended the committee with the same charge, with a committee membership of 7 to 9 members, and removed the requirement of specific town staff to be committee members.

4. Construction project update

- Construction project still moving forward, though not as fast with impacts due to COVID-19.
- 2 change orders were recently approved by MassDOT.
 - Planned gradient slope to trail near intersection of Lake Street and Washington Ave. has been changed to a retaining wall. This is due to trucks using loading dock area along the trail at this location.
 - Also approved were additional amenities requested by the Town in September 2019.
- Access to trail at interim southern terminus is still undetermined given the use of a portion of the ROW for MBTA Station construction access.
 - Access to trail was originally planned from Willow street.
 - LaGrange and Mechanic Streets are not verified as open to the public.

- In soil testing for access to the MBTA station, contractor found contamination along the right of way at the end of Willow Street
- Town is testing more extensively and has notified MassDEP and the EPA
- Remediation may be needed, currently the area is contained, and is not part of railbed but on the embankment.
 - **JO** – do we know if contamination is on town land only?
 - **JF** - Extent and origin of contamination currently unknown. Timing of testing and results are currently unknown but will yield more information.
 - **JO** – noted that the MBTA may have done more extensive testing than town originally did as part of purchase of land.
 - **JO** - do we know cost of Licensed Site Professional (LSP) and the source of funding?
 - **JF** - no. CRT design was to fill the contaminated area. This design could serve as part of remediation plan.
 - **DC** – which building are PCBs closest to?
 - **JF** – Closest building is brick building, may be occupied by Tingley Electric. Testing was a composite. More detailed testing to follow.
 - **JO** – BOS and MBTA aware, unknown for sure if it will impact CRT, but this is on land that is not needed for the current CRT construction and is some distance from the project area.

5. Trail connections

- Connect to MBTA station:
 - The Town submitted a MassTrails grant application for funding of design; we should have notice in June.
 - MassDOT approved the project at a Project Review Committee meeting on April 30, and considers it a priority. This helps get the project in line for construction funding.
 - Town was to fund approximately 25% of design costs, however given that our capital plans are being scaled back, the funding request for Town Meeting will not include this funding. Committee will need to discuss at a later date. MBTA is planning to construct base trail, so this project would likely be focused on the ramp bringing the CRT up to street level.
- Lake Cochituate path:
 - MassDOT has approved it as a project for design purposes and will begin design this year. Connecting Hartford street to Route 9 and the CRT.
 - **JB** – Do we know the timing on design and project completion?
 - **JO** – Don't know. Design firm was just brought on-line. Design will likely not finish this year, especially given the number of abutters and the need to engage with the neighborhood.
- Southern terminus:
 - Connections to southern part of trail should be a focus given the MBTA will be using the ROW for construction access. For example, LaGrange street is a private way.
 - **JO** – Requested input from **JF** on how to proceed?

- **JF** – Town counsel is currently backlogged; committee can put in request for direction but shouldn't expect a quick response.

B Coco made the motion *“Move the Cochituate Rail Trail Advisory Committee request town counsel provide opinion and advice for public access to CRT via LaGrange street”* The motion was seconded by **B Sanchez** and the Committee approved the motion via roll call vote 7-0-0.

6. Operations and Maintenance Plan

- **WS, JO** and **BC** to schedule meeting with Jeremy and Art Goodhind of DPW.
- Given current budget outlook O&M document will need to be more “home grown”
 - **JM** – There has been good progress on the plan and input from CRT and others welcome.
 - **JO** - will additional volunteers be needed?
 - **JM** – Most likely. “Adopt a spot” and other groups / individuals would be helpful and could supplement any resource gaps.
 - **JO** question to John Gregory (Friends of Natick Trails): Is there an opportunity for the Friends to help, especially with Volunteers?
 - **JG**- yes, this could be a good opportunity. The Stewardship committee will be an important ally as well.

7. Sponsorship update

Friends of Natick Trails

A recap of the Friends of Natick Trails (FONT), a not for profit group established in 2016, was presented by John Gregory.

JG – FONT took part in a walk with the Natick Historical Society and others for ideas related to art and historical information. Working with the NHS will be a good collaboration and an opportunity for funding.

JG – Other projects and updates related to FONT.

- Plans such as sponsoring trails day, now pushed off due to current situation (COVID-19).
- The new Stewardship committee will have an impact on the direction of FONT.
- FONT plans to help with fundraising and is flexible with other involvement.
- Fundraising is currently the only opportunity for work to progress given the pandemic which could also impact timing of funding drives, etc.
- A funding grant could be a good opportunity for corporate sponsorship via historic markers etc.

JO – Are there other opportunities such as a brochure for sponsorship items such as benches?

JG – yes. The locations are certain, brochure is being finalized but is not specific to historical plaques / markers but more general and a good handout to potential donors.

JO noted the P&S of the land from CSX was closed in part through a consideration of in-kind sponsorship with a value of approximately \$275,000. CSX has declined to participate at this time but has not yet ruled out future participation.

JG - Will there be any certainty of CSX's desire to exercise the clause?

JO – We are 3 years into a 10-year window for CSX to exercise the consideration.

8. Public Art

- There is an opportunity to develop assets along the trail. **BC** expressed interest in helping coordinate. There may be an opportunity to collaborate with art institutions such as a museum.

9. Outstanding Project Items

- CRT requested that the vacant house at 294 Bacon Street be demolished, and it has been demolished. It was noted that **JM** did not get to use a sledgehammer. A minor asbestos remediation issue caused a delay.
- Space may be used for staging for bridge work. If it is used as staging it will be restored by the contractor.
- The public cannot access this lot via car, so a parking lot at this location would be impractical. The lot could be used for other uses such as art or plantings. The committee could have representatives work with abutting neighborhood to determine best use. **JB** volunteered to work with **BC** on working with neighborhood. **JF** offered to coordinate with committee to determine scope and plan. **JO** to notify open space committee of the availability of the space.
- **Bob Childs** (member of public / abutter) noted that Bacon Street has limited parking and there are concerns by residents of extra cars on Bacon Street to access rail trail.
 - **JO** – Noted the Safety Committee was informed of this concern and that the CRT Committee has previously recommended that parking on Bacon Street be regulated.
 - i. **BC** – Asked Bob Childs if it was possible for him to obtain get feedback from neighbors the Bacon Street residents. Bob indicated this would not likely be fruitful as he lives on the opposite end of street.

Mechanic Street lot and connection

- **JO** noted that it is unresolved whether we have public access to the full length of Mechanic Street and to the Town-owned parking lot at 11 Mechanic Street. The property owner is currently in a legal dispute with town. It is likely that there will be increased public interest in using the street and the parking lot after the trail is opened and parking becomes an issue. There is a planned connection to the lot from the trail. Access issues may delay this connection.

10. Events

- a. Earth Day Tent Talks
 - i. Earth Day talks about the CRT were presented by **JO** virtually as part of Earth Day.
- b. MathWorks Earth Week
 - i. A virtual presentation was made to MathWorks by **JO**.
- c. Fisk Church June 2, 4PM
 - i. Presentation was pushed back from May.

11. Meeting Minutes

- **B Coco** made the motion: *“Move the Cochituate Rail Trail Advisory Committee approve the 2/19/20 meeting minutes”* The motion was seconded by **D Camacho** and the Committee approved the motion 7-0-0.

12. Future agenda items and new business

Agenda items were summarized for future meetings.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 PM on a motion by **D Camacho**, seconded by **B Coco** and the committee approved the motion 6-0-0.

Respectfully submitted by William Schoenig