

**NATICK COCHITUATE RAIL TRAIL ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**APPROVED MINUTES OF MEETING**  
**December 5, 2023**  
**Hybrid Meeting – Dlott Room Natick Town Hall and Zoom**  
**Minutes approved in a posted meeting on December 28, 2023**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Present</b>	<b>Absent</b>
David Camacho	Member at Large (vice chair)	X	
Barbara Coco	Member at Large	X	
Robert Mueller	Member at Large	X	
Joshua Ostroff	Board of Selectmen (chair)	X	
Barbara Sanchez	Recreation and Parks Commission	X	
Michelle Languedoc	Member at Large (clerk)	X	
William Schoenig	Member at Large	X	
Joel Barrera	Member at Large	X	
Michael Walz	Member at Large		X
Claire Rundelli	Open Space Planner	X	
Dennis Ravenelle	Member at Large	X	
John Marshall	Deputy Town Administrator	X	
Morgan Griffiths	Town of Natick Transportation and Economic Development Planner	X	
Miles Connors	Public	X	
John Brennan	Public	X	
Bob Comiskey	Public	X	
George Eckert	Public	X	

The meeting was called to order at 6:34PM, having been posted in accordance with the Open Meeting Law under the provisions allowing virtual public meetings.

**1. Welcome, introductions, Announcements**

- NYE event on the rail trail (3<sup>rd</sup> year)

**2. Public comment**

- No comments

**3. Committee status and potential staff working group**

- Committee achievements since 2006 – Josh shared a presentation of CRT and committee milestones and acknowledged the 38 members of the committee since its formation in 2006.
- Draft recommendation to Select Board – Josh read the draft recommendation to sunset the CRT committee. Josh previously met with Jon Marshall, Claire, Morgan and John Westerling, DPW Director, about the work that needs to be done going forward to create a working

group to support the CRT (with involvement from the Friends of Natick Trails (FoNT)) that would report into the Town Administrator. These areas include:

- Capital projects
  - Maintenance
  - Programs and events
  - Policy
- There was discussion on the recommendation.
    - Joel asked about who would be the owning body of the CRT to help ensure accountability. Jon Marshall & Claire answered that several departments are key players with volunteer support and fundraising by FoNT all under the Town Administrator's ownership. It may be similar to how the Town Common is managed (multiple departments depending on the circumstance). Natick Days was cited as an example of collaboration across Town agencies with volunteer participation.
    - John Brennen commented his observation that once the Framingham CRT shut down, future initiatives stopped and expressed concern that this committee has been effective, especially with the public postings of meetings. Josh's observation was the Town of Framingham may not have leveraged their committee enough and it wasn't as much of a priority to the community until relatively recently, but that was changing with staff and volunteer engagement.
    - Josh spoke to his confidence in Town staff to work collaboratively and has already been working over and above the cadence of advisory committee meetings (a couple times a year).
    - Dennis brought up the need for a champion (as Josh has been). Could a comparable champion be put in place?
    - Jon Marshall asked about advisory committees in other towns. Josh suggested that every community is different and we need to set it up in a "Natick" way but it will likely evolve.
    - Will asked if we could have the town designate a point person we can go to. Josh agreed that there should be a point of contact.
    - Joel also agreed that having the one person to lead was key. He also mentioned unfinished business of honoring Natick history of indigenous people (e.g. it has been 350 years since King Phillip's War)
    - Jon Marshall and Claire spoke to transparency to the public of what happens at working groups (with the example of Natick Days)
    - Miles Connors gave his appreciation for the support of the CRT committee. He has worked with Art Goodhind on invasive species. He asked about future work in natural species restoration.
  - Dennis offered a motion on the recommendation to discharge the advisory committee and Town Administrator convene a working group for the 4 areas listed above prioritizing accountability, coordination, and visibility and that the Town Administrator designate a lead person. The motion was seconded by Will and unanimously approved by roll call.

#### 4. Natick Project Updates

- Mechanic Street lot: Claire noted that a past recommendation for a 4 hour parking limit was endorsed by the Conservation Commission, and was a consent agenda item for the next Select Board meeting. John Brennen asked about paying to park and about enforcement. We don't currently have police capacity for enforcement, but would observe behavior, and

there was not a plan to charge for parking but that we may be able to use a parking app to help regulate parking. overall enforcement areas in the town. There was discussion on the need for similar regulation and signage at Chrysler Rd to deter Avalon residents and visitors from monopolizing trail parking there.

- Natick Center Connection – MBTA station is slated to be completed next year and a connection to the outbound ramp is expected early fall 2024. Still in the design phase with the ramp to Main Street (25% stage)
- Lake Cochituate Path – at a recent public hearing comments were overall positive; project moving forward toward 75% design. John Brennen asked about the width of the path and Claire spoke to the dimensions and proposals on it – there were constraints at various points but it was noted that where possible it will be 10’ or wider.
- 9/27 Interchange – will create a 10ft shared use path all the way to Mathworks Apple Hill resulting in a shared use path along much of Route 9 in Natick. There will also be widening of the sidewalk on the north side of Route 9 between Camp Arrowhead and Lake Shore Drive.
- Route 9 bridge repairs – no update on where it all stands; Town will follow up with MassDOT next week on repairing the ponding issue. Barb asked about need for repair on the Route 30 bridge, which the working group can follow up on.
- Washington/Lake St signal – will be done when the roadway project is complete, likely 2024.
- Fisher Street crossing – may soon be a pedestrian crossing signal; Jon said it has already gone through the safety committee and asking for appropriations.
- Potential connections to Modera, Avalon, and Cloverleaf – eventually they will happen, Claire is following up with recommendations on how they can submit for funding through the Community Preservation Act (CPA). There was discussion on erosion of the footpath leading up to Cloverleaf apartments, and Town staff are monitoring this.

## 5. Updates

- Trail maintenance, landscaping and invasives management – primarily by the town, with FoNT and volunteer support.
- Barb spoke to the possibility of an offshoot of FoNT which could be CRT trail keepers. She also spoke about the trailside shed and water tank.
- Trail amenities and revolving fund – low 6 figures from trail sponsorships; goes through Select Board which keeps the CRT maintenance capital expenses self-supporting.
- Events (public art, NYE, other events) – the public art was successful and there are things to learn from it for future such events.
- Accessible cycling – 9/30 was a very successful event and there will be more, as the Town has grant funding for it.
- Friends of Natick Trails updates provided by Josh. It was noted that should the committee be discharged, FoNT was a volunteer option for members.

## 6. Meeting Minutes for 6/20/23

- On a motion by Joel and seconded by Dave the 6/20/23 minutes were unanimously approved by roll call vote

The meeting was adjourned at 8:10PM on a motion by Will, seconded by Dave and voted unanimously by roll call.

Respectfully submitted by Michelle Languedoc, Clerk