

Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes

February 4, 2021

Meeting held via Zoom

- **Call to Order**
 - The February 4th, 2021 meeting of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Advisory Committee (“BFRTAC”) was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by co-chair Nat Welch
- **Attendees**
 - BFRTAC Members: Nat Welch, Richard Fahlander, Adrienne Boardman, Carol Steele, Dorcas Miller.
 - Town Representatives: Marcia Rasmussen, Director of Planning and Land Management; Terri Ackerman, Select Board Liaison.
 - Members of the Public: Approximately 20-25 community members were present.
 - Recorder: Adrienne Boardman
- **New Committee Member** - Dorcas Miller was formally welcomed as a new BFRT Advisory Committee member.
- **Approval of Meeting Minutes**
 - A motion was made to approve the December 3, 2020 meeting minutes and seconded
 - The December 3, 2020 minutes were approved unanimously by roll call vote
- **Town Update Memo** - Ms. Rasmussen presented the monthly project report, which is incorporated as an addendum to the meeting minutes.
 - Ms. Rasmussen provided context on the origin of the Warner’s Pond and the White Row Neighborhood historical panel and noted that Committee and public review and comments would be gathered at the close of the Town Update
 - Ms. Rasmussen shared a map image of the West Concord commuter parking lot to show the proposed location of the bicycle racks
 - Committee member Dorcas Miller asked about the need to provide shelter vs a standalone rack; Ms. Rasmussen explained the benefits of providing covering from shade and rain
 - Committee member Adrienne Boardman asked about decision rationale for the proposed location and what considerations need to be given to removal of parking spaces; Co-chair Nat Welch followed up and asked for consideration of what other Committees or town entities should be involved in decision of where to place the bicycle shelters
 - Ms. Rasmussen walked through which parking lots are privately owned vs public

- Committee member Carol Steele suggested future discussion on the use/placement of porta-potties along the trail; Ms. Rasmussen explained that restrooms will be available at Gerow Park by Warner's Pond, but agreed that porta-potties might serve a benefit in the interim
 - Barbara Pike mentioned that the Friends of Bruce Freeman Rail Trail usually fund seasonal porta-potties (2 in Acton and 2 in Chelmsford); invited discussion with Ms. Rasmussen to support the need in West Concord
- A motion was made to approve the historical interpretive panel and seconded
 - The historical interpretive panel was approved unanimously by roll call vote
- Ms. Rasmussen to provide more information on the bike shelters for discussion at next meeting

Committee Business

- Follow Up to December 3, 2020 Meeting "Last Half Mile" Discussion
 - Site visit targeted for March for residents and abutters to review the current plans and discuss plans for fencing and gates
 - There will be four opportunities for site walks: Thursday, March 18 at 3:30PM and 4:00PM and Friday, March 19 at 8:00AM and 8:30AM - with the goal of managing the groups to no more than 10 residents at each time
 - BFRTAC will help coordinate signup process; details to be finalized during the Committee meeting on March 4
- Junction Park Letter Review
 - Dorrie Kehoe had suggested that the letter be addressed to the Select Board, in addition to the Town Manager
 - It was noted that Terri Akerman, Select Board Liaison, forwarded the BFRTAC a letter that the Select Board received from the West Concord Green Thumbs
 - Committee member Dorcas Miller explained that she also serves on the Green Thumbs Committee and explained she would be strongly opposed to more signage in what is intended to be a green space; Committee agreed to continue to brainstorm options and recommendations
 - A motion was made to approve the Junction Park letter, with the addition of addressing the letter to the Select Board, and seconded
 - The Junction Park Letter was approved unanimously by roll call vote
- Reformatory Branch Trail and Minuteman Bikeway Extension Project
 - Co-chair Richard Fahlander explained that the Committee's enthusiasm perhaps "put the cart before the horse" in the original letter draft to the Select Board, but explained that the Committee's stance is now to put aside the October discussion and start fresh with the current meeting

- Co-chair Nat Welch emphasized the intent is to raise the topic to the Select Board and allow them to make the decision of what Committee (new or existing) should have accountability for the evaluation and planning process.
- Opened for public comments:
 - Comments from the public focused around the following themes:
 - Appreciation that the BFRTAC was reevaluating its approach with the content and direction of its letter to the Select Board
 - The evaluation and planning process should include ample opportunities for public input
 - The Reformatory Branch Trail should continue to be viewed and utilized as a multi-use trail
 - Impact to the Great Meadows Wildlife Refuge should be evaluated
 - Co-chair Richard Fahlander extended appreciation for the public comments and feels that the approach the BFRTAC is taking with the modified letter aligns with what has been discussed
 - A motion was made to approve the Reformatory Branch Trail letter, and seconded
 - The Reformatory Branch Trail letter was approved unanimously by roll call vote
 - Terri Ackerman, Select Board Liaison extended appreciation to the Committee and public and indicated that she would include reference in her liaison report that the Select Board should expect this letter and recommend that they take up this topic to address
- Trail Usage Count Program
 - With the Rte 2 bridge being completed around November, the Town is working with various agencies to determine best strategy how to understand impact to West Concord
 - Trail counts would gauge traffic at several points in Concord and hopefully extend to Acton too; more details to come in March
 - No questions or comments from the Committee
- Committee Liaison Reports
 - Co-chair Richard Fahlander: Transportation Advisory Committee is creating a sub committee for Bicycle Transportation (right now just made up several members from that Committee)

Correspondence & Public Comments

- Committee received letter from the residents of Lalli Woods, Shaw Farm Road, Elm Place, Elm Valley, Commerford Road, and Black Horse Place regarding safety and accessibility concerns; Co-chair Richard Fahlander has conducted a site visit
- Nasir Rana (Lalli Woods) was joined by Caroline Mahoney (Commerford Road) to provide a summary of neighborhood location, an overview of the rapid growth and

development of the area, and express concern that no accessibility improvements have been made to accommodate the increase in residents in the area

- The route of the BFRT is roughly a quarter-mile away, yet it is difficult for residents to safely access
- Asked for any guidance or support that BFRTAC can provide to help secure funding for Feasibility Study and any necessary improvements
- Co-chair Nat Welch explained that while the remit of the BFRTAC does not include many of the concerns raised, the Committee could lend support by writing a letter to bring attention to safety and accessibility concerns to the rail trail
 - Co-chair Richard Fahlander agreed to take action to draft letter to be reviewed at the March meeting
- Barbara Pike (118 Border Road) - Asked if anyone has further reviewed the information provided about the Prison Graveyard; it was suggested that the person proposing the idea should come to a future Committee meeting
 - One Co-chair to extend invite.
- Nancy Cronin (216 Garfield Road) - Very happy to hear that the Committee is not pushing the development and agrees that it needs to be discussed much more clearly
- Tanya & Mark Gailus () - Appreciated the acknowledgement that the Committee perhaps got ahead of themselves. Feels that the Reformatory Trail is already multi-use and stated the importance of wide input; Tanya suggests that the letter implies that the public initiated the discussion whereas she feels the Committee did
- Ellen Quackenbush (Prairie Street) - Concerns about the appropriate use of the Reformatory Trail and that it was never intended to be a wide trail but more so a narrow-gauge pathway; also mentioned the consideration the path goes through the wildlife refuge and is concerned about increased traffic and who would monitor usage
- Dan Schrager (24 Mallard Drive) - Expressed that the Bedford plan may be short-sighted, but that Concord does need to determine how to address. Discussed that prior discussion on the topic suggested that cyclists be encouraged to go along Rte 62; suggests the optics that the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail would oversee this scope suggest that the decision has already been made to pave it as a bike path
- Kate Kavanagh (51A Nashoba Road) - Suggested “let Bedford do Bedford” and “Concord do Concord” and allow Concord to prioritize nature
- Jen Soalt (123 Peter Spring Road) - Also wanted to add context about the unique and rich social space of the trail because it is multi-use
- Paul Jameson (419 College Road) - Obvious solution is to have the bikers coming from Bedford go to Rte 62, but traffic problems would need to be assessed
- The meeting was adjourned at 8:46 p.m.

Next Meeting – Thursday, March 4, 2021 via Zoom.