

Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Advisory Sub Committee

Meeting Minutes

April 5, 2022

Hybrid Meeting

Call to Order

- The April 5, 2022 meeting of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Sub Committee was called to order at 12:51PM

Attendees

- Sub Committee Members: Nat Welch, Tracy Hansen, Adrienne Boardman
- Town Representatives: Marcia Rasmussen (Director of Planning and Land Management), Ron Holsinger (Safety Officer), Steve Dookran (Town Engineer), Alan Cathcart (Director of Public Works)
- Around 8 members of the public were in attendance on Zoom and 4 in person, including 3 members of the BFRTAC
- Recorder: Adrienne Boardman

Approval of Meeting Minutes

- A motion was made to approve the March 16, 2022 meeting minutes and seconded
 - The March 16, 2022 minutes were approved unanimously by roll call vote

Review of Proposed Scenarios with Town Staff

- Comments from Alan Cathcart (Director of Public Works): Highlighted the importance of the previous work that has been done to design Junction Park and emphasized that it is difficult to relitigate decisions that were made in the past
- BFRTAC Co-Chair Nat Welch provided an overview of the charge set from the Select Board for the conceptual redesign and highlighted the survey findings and sentiments gathered so far
- Alan Cathcart emphasized the importance of presenting the conceptual designs by highlighting the foundational concepts and benefits that each offers
- Short Term Plans:
 - Comments from Stephen Dookran (Town Engineer): Plan #1 appears to be the least amount of work; discussion around how to separate wheeled vs non-wheeled users; Adrienne Boardman emphasized the importance of factoring in BFRT users who might be off wheels (i.e. walkers) and encouraged that the discussion be framed around BFRT users and park users
 - Nat Welch discussed a possible "1A" short term plan which would use visual barriers to separate BFRT users from park users

- Tracy Hansen referenced the recommendation for a line of planters to visually create a lane
- Stephen Dookran referenced the minimum width needed for cyclists and pedestrians and raised the concern about whether enough space is given to accommodate the plan
- Tracy Hansen referenced the “Freedom Trail Approach” to use painted bricks or lines to signal to BFRT users where to go and also referenced the concern raised from the public previously that a short term could become the long term
- Ron Holsinger (Safety Officer): Raised the question of state or federal regulations pertaining to Rail Trails; Nat Welch shared information discussed with MassDOT around width required
- Long Term Plans: Tracy walked through the fundamentals of the long term plans
 - Stephen Dookran raised the concern around loss of parking spots in earlier plans; Nat Welch explained that parking has not been considered at this stage of planning
- Marcia Rasmussen asked Town Staff to share questions or highlight any information they felt was missing:
 - Stephen Dookran explained that there first has to be clarity on the MBTA property consideration and a full understanding of the MBTA and parking impact; any impact to the bioretention area would essentially require a complete redesign and that can be quite costly; Nat Welch asked if there’s a measure of the benefit to the bioretention; Stephan Dookran explained that it is intended to capture the “100-year storm”; Nat Welch asked for confirmation that an alternative would be piping; Stephen confirmed that was correct
 - Alan Cathcart (Director of Public Works) confirmed that they are willing to help where they can and emphasized that the history of why decisions were made can perhaps inform what is being considered now; Engineering team is reviewing other town projects and acknowledged it is harder to redesign than design initially
 - Ron Holsinger (Safety Officer) emphasized to consider safety and how easily emergency vehicle could access the area or have a stretcher brought to the BFRT
- **Public Comments**
 - Dorie Kehoe raised question on drains vs bioretention
 - Discussion around incorporating a boardwalk for over bioretention
 - Bill and Sallie Satterthwaite (297 Lawsbrook Road): Asked for careful consideration of language used so that the BFRT isn’t viewed as a bicycle only path but needs to be designed for pedestrians as well

- Mike Mahoney: Asked for clarity on bridge specifics; it was explained that is a separate town project and not part of the BFRT or Junction Park conceptual redesign
- Dorrie Kehoe raised concerns on technology during today's meeting and difficulty hearing attendees; Emphasized the importance of not thinking about safety concerns as the situation exists now, but to think forward to when the Rte 2 bridge opens and the influx of traffic; Expressed concerns with the Short Term Plan 1 and the requirement regarding trail width and encouraged the Sub Committee to review the specifics of the lease that the Town has with MassDOT for the Rail Trail and whether the town can design to just focus on the Park aspect of the space; Speaking as a member of the Green Thumbs explained that there are concerns about safety and not necessarily to preserve each tree and planting
 - Nat Welch explained that the BFRTAC is reopening this topic and trying to work towards a resolution now and acknowledges the history and discussions that have occurred in the initial design and since
- Nancy Crowley: Emphasized the importance of the park; feels that many of the plans are focused on cutting up the park and end up detracting from the design and enjoyment of the park itself

The meeting was adjourned at 1:54PM.