

Friends of the Milford Upper Charles Trail
and
The Milford Upper Charles Trail Committee
Joint Meeting Minutes

The first meeting of the Friends of the Milford Upper Charles Trail was held with the Milford Upper Charles Trail Committee on Wednesday, March 9, 2005 at the Milford Town Hall. There were 20 Friends of the Trail and 6 Trail Committee members in attendance. Thanks to Reno's perseverance in keeping in contact with the Friends volunteers, the attendance reflected an overwhelmingly positive show of interest.

Reno introduced the committee members, and then asked each of those in attendance to state their name, address and any affiliations with public organizations.

In attendance were Bob Weidknecht, Holliston Bike Trail Committee Chairman, and Craig DellaPenna, formerly with the Rail to Trail Conservancy, who came from Northampton to attend this meeting. He shared his experiences and advice regarding trail development and formation of Friends Groups.

Reno first gave an overview of the trail; when the concept began, showing on the trail map the proposed route, the different phases of the route, and explaining the project, land acquisition issues, and the current status. He explained the different funding involved, such as; Town participation, Federal and State Grants, voluntary no cost easements, etc. He said Phase 1 construction should begin this spring and that the low bidder for the contract was Northern Construction Services from Weymouth Mass. at a bid price of \$1.4 million.

The floor was then opened for questions. Reno and others addressed the following questions/issues:

- Are there wells near the trail? – Not in close enough proximity that would be affected by the Trail.
- Relationship between New England Power Co. & Massachusetts Electric Co.—The best Reno could determine is that Mass Electric is a subsidiary of New England Power. New England Power is a company under National Grid whose primary owners are based in Great Britain
- Are there utility poles located on the trail? --- Yes, in the vicinity of the little league field at the Fino Field recreation area. Mass Electric is responsible for relocating these poles.
- Why the delay with New England Power Co.? --- There is no good answer other than they are not placing a high priority on the Town's request for no cost rights to construct a trail over their land.
- Why not take the land by Eminent Domain? Although this is an option, an adverse taking at this time is not preferred due to the cost to Town for damages (which could be

significant and definitely not in the budget) and an almost certain appeal from New England Power either on the basis of a conflict between the Town's eminent domain powers and NEP's eminent domain powers and/or the dollar amount of the damages awarded to NEP by the Town.

- How did the Town get rights to construct a portion of the Phase 2 trail over the abandoned railbed that is part of the new Zaine Ridge development off east Main Street? --- This project required a special permit from the Planning Board. The Planning Board (upon the recommendation of the Town Planner – Reno at the time) added a condition to the special permit that the landowner provide a permanent no cost easement for the purpose of constructing and maintaining a bike trail over this abandoned railbed. This segment is the last section in Milford that will connect to the Holliston Trail.
- How long will it take to complete the trail—Best guess at this time is that it could be completed by late fall. We will learn more at the contractor's pre-construction meeting that MassHighway is planning for early April.

Reno then explained the role of the Milford Upper Charles Trail Committee versus the Friends of the Milford Upper Charles Trail. The Milford Upper Charles Trail Committee is appointed by the Selectmen with the directive to do all that is necessary to construct the trail including preparation of plans, design, permitting, land acquisition, and secure funding from all available sources. In carrying out this directive the Committee has the official responsibility to review contracts for Selectmen approval, administer the contracts, hold regular public meetings, and (with majority votes), approve invoices for payment, and otherwise conduct all other administrative aspects of the project.

The Friends of the Trail will voluntarily assume the maintenance, monitoring, and promotion of the trail along with fund raising for amenities and improvements. Once the trail construction is completed the Committee will disband and the Friends will be the group that insures the long-term success of the project.

Each participant was asked to fill out a questionnaire stating his or her name, address, occupation and area of expertise and interest. They were asked for their ideas on how to get more members recruited. Some of the suggestions were:

- High School students as part of a Community Service Project
- Art students to help with brochures
- Boy Scouts, service time for advancements and badges
- Different troops to own and maintain parts of the trail
- Contact the local Chamber of Commerce
- Solicit friends of trail for cash donations.
- Solicit landscaping companies for donations.
- Corporate sponsors
- Set up a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, to be able to raise and spend funds without Town meeting approval.

Instead of setting up a separate 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation for the Friends of the Milford Trail, Bob Buckley and Bob Weidknecht suggested setting up a separate account (similar the Holliston Trail Committee's account) under the existing Upper Charles Trail Conservation Inc. 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation. Bob Buckley will follow up with UTC Inc.

Craig Della Penna offered to speak before public organizations to solicit volunteers, and donations.

The web-site was discussed at length. Many felt we should have our own, apart from the Town of Milford. Holliston has it own set up and was mentioned that Assabet River Trail also has a good one. They felt it would be a good tool to get additional interested parties, not only volunteers but Corporate sponsors. We will need to advertise the web-site. Reno will try to meet with Margaret Myatt and Tom Frost to discuss web-site development.

A brochure was also discussed. Copies of the Holliston brochure was passed around and Reno asked for suggestions. He noted that he would try to get in touch with Shirley Niro, a professional graphic artist, to discuss brochure development. Also, a suggestion was made to use a two sided postcard to hand out at town events or those of public organizations. It could have a map of the trail on one side and pictures on the other. It is an inexpensive way of making the public aware of the trail.

Craig Della Penna also offered to set up a list-serve for anybody who is interested in discussing the trail on line, but he would need the e-mail address of the Friends and Committee members. He stated that individual e-mail addresses are kept private in a list serve environment.

Reno asked everyone to think about taking on a Friends leadership role and how they could help with organizing the group.

It was decided that future meetings would be held every first Wednesday of the month and that meeting notices would be sent out by e-mail (or by U.S. mail to those few individuals who do not have e-mail).

Bob Weidknecht from the Holliston Trail gave a short overview on the progress of their section. He said when completed it will be a 6.7 mile long trail that runs parallel to Route 16. Phase 1 plans are awaiting approval from MassHighway. Phase 2 delay is caused by land acquisition negotiations with CSX Railroad. He said Holliston is doing a video to document the history of the rail beds. He welcomed our committee to attend their meetings.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45P.M.