

**Dryden Rail Trail Friends and Task Force
Minutes of the Jan. 18, 2017 Meeting
Dryden Town DPW**

Attendance: Bob Beck, Todd Bittner, David Fogel, Jim Miner, Bruno Schickel, David Bravo-Cullen, Judy Pierpont, Kyra Stephanoff, Alice Green, Nancy Kleinrock, Milo Richmond, Steve Shaum, Armin Heurich, Mark Wilson

Meeting convened at 7:06 pm.

Reports

Town Board approval of trail easements received to date – Bob

(All included in Town Board Minutes of 12/15/2016)

1. **PUBLIC HEARING** The Town board took public comments on the acquisition of easements for the trail. Only positive comments received.
2. **“RESOLUTION #191 (2016) NEG SEQR DEC - TAIL EASEMENT ACQUISITION AUTHORIZATION”** No environmental concerns were declared after the review. The SEQR review was for the entire length of the rail bed, thus covering future easements as they are accepted.
3. **“RESOLUTION #192 (2016) - AUTHORIZING ACQUISITION OF EASEMENTS FOR THE PURPOSES OF PROVIDING RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES TO THE PUBLIC”** The Town received and approved eight easements, one of which included five parcels of Cornell owned property.

Next steps:

The Town Supervisor must sign and file the easements. This hadn't been completed by the January meeting.

Collecting remaining signed easements. Dan Lamb, who is a notary, can accompany Bob to expedite the process for the remaining landowners.

DOT grant application

No word has been received yet about whether the DOT has approved the Town's application for funding for Phase One of trail construction. Bob noted that the town did receive NYS approval for funds for repairs or replacement of two town roadway bridges.

William George Area easements

Bruno showed a colored map of a plan he has been working on with surveyor Mike Reagan, to get up and over George Road. He said because the steepness of the section, the trail will need a 600 foot run to maintain a 5% slope for accessibility. This configuration could allow for creation of a 5 spot parking area off George Rd. Mike Reagan has a set of 1917 survey maps of the railroad bed, which he received from Mahlon Perkins who got the maps from the trustee of the bankrupt railroad. They're an asset because they allow identification of places where the RR right of way is wider than the standard 66 feet.

DEC/Game Farm effort – Todd, Bob

Dan Lamb plans to follow up on an initial contact with Ken Lynch, Deputy Commissioner of the NYS Department of Conservation (DEC), and former director of our DEC Region 7, regarding

new efforts to secure the DEC/Game Farm trail easement. There is hope that the new DEC director of Fish and Wildlife, Tony Wilkinson, who is formerly a regional director of the Nature Conservancy, may be receptive to the trail easement proposal. Negotiations will continue with Cornell Real Estate and the Agriculture Experiment Station for an easement near their fields off Stevenson Rd.

Upcoming funding opportunities – Bob

New Friends group member Mark Wilson volunteered to work with Bob to submit a grant request with a very tight deadline. Bob learned of a grant opportunity from the Doppelt Family Trail Development Fund, offered through the national Rails to Trails Conservancy. This fund can be used toward the local match of other grants, or for other aspects of trail construction that wouldn't be covered by the DOT grant. Due date for the proposal is midnight, Jan. 31.

Other grant opportunities include funding from the NYS Department of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. John Kieffer, who took the lead with the DOT grant application, said he is willing to work on the Parks, Rec and Historic Preservation grant. A request for proposals is expected in March or April. It was noted that the railroad history theme planned for the Freeville Pocket Park, and other “stations” on the trail would lend themselves well to the historical education mission.

Continued discussion: Means of enhancing community involvement and local financial support– Alice, Judy, Bob

Bruno pointed to the need for work on the overall theme of the trail, to tie in marketing and design for consistency from the Schug Trail all the way to Game Farm Road. This might include naming rights for a “station” along the trail, or adopting a section, etc. Todd agreed that branding for the trail should include a logo, and a theme reflected in trail signage, kiosks and benches. Armin mentioned Rick Manning's work on design elements for the Cayuga Waterfront Trail in Ithaca.

It was decided to search for design facilitation expertise from the Friends of the Trail Group. A planner, landscape architect, or person with CAD design training, might help lead a community meeting to collect and organize local ideas for the trail, in a “charette” style session.

There was some discussion about whether a separate, not-for-profit entity should be created to handle donations to the trail. The Town can receive tax-deductible donations towards the trail. It is the applicant, and would be the recipient for the DOT grant. It was suggested that the steering committee should look into the best process for receiving and spending other donated funds. Perhaps there could be a dedicated fund in the town budget. Or perhaps a local service organization that already has 501(c)(3) status would be willing to sponsor the trail project.

Kyra asked if Ithacatrails.org could play this role. Todd said that the Tompkins County Parks & Trails Network is a 6-year-old consortium of trail supporters, an informal group which created the new website with a grant from the County Tourism Program. But is not a formal non-profit organization.

Volunteer Recruitment

With spring approaching, the time has come for organizing volunteers to move the trail forward. Bruno suggested that when the elements of the trail are decided, the task force can set up work groups for both on site work like clearing and stump removal, and possibly for off site construction of features like signs, kiosks and benches. David Bravo Cullen said it will help to

have the Town provide insurance for volunteers. Todd said volunteers will be asked to sign a waiver, and perhaps receive safety training if using chainsaws or other power equipment. He will provide the form used by the Cornell Natural Areas Program.

Goals/Next Steps

Bruno plans to obtain the land survey and work to complete the easement acquisitions for the George Road trail section. He will also re-contact landowners for an easement west of Mt. Pleasant Rd. and another west of Pinckney Rd.

Bob, Bruno and Alice will work on a plan for fundraising, design, and volunteer recruitment, building on the blueprint created by the Design Connect group from Cornell.

David BC wants to have a discussion about the crossing at Route 13. It's expected that DOT will drive this decision if it approves the trail grant. Cornell has granted an easement from the point where the rail bed meets Route 13 along the west side of the highway down to the bridge underpass, but there is no Cornell easement to reconnect with the trail along the east side of the highway or east along Fall Creek to Pinckney Rd. because there are grade issues, and problems with disruption of the natural area there. However, Bob has obtained an easement on the property at the west end of Hall Woods Rd., east of and adjacent to Route 13.

Next meeting: 7 pm Wednesday, Feb. 15 at the Dryden DPW.

Adjournment at 8:45 pm