

**Dryden Rail Trail Friends and Task Force**  
**Minutes of the Meeting Monday, February 18, 2019**  
**Varna Community Center**

**Attendance:** David Fogel, Robert O'Mara, Marie McRae, John Kiefer, Susan Ashdown, Diane Tessaglia-Hymes, Bob Beck, Steve Winans, Alice Green, Mark Vallely, Judy Pierpont. Rosalie Borzik, Todd Bittner, Nancy Munkenbeck

**Call to order** (7:03 p.m.) – Bob Beck

**Additions to agenda:** none

**Approval of January minutes;** Two found typos will be submitted to Alice

**Celebration planning for Dryden-to-Freeville trail opening** – Susan

The event has been officially set for Saturday May 11 at Old George Rd., about half way between the villages. Susan said she is excited that the William George Agency has agreed to provide a large equipment storage building as a “pavilion” where the celebration can be headquartered. Save the date signs will be posted along the trail leading up to the event.

She said she'd like to contact all the contingent landowners to get them involved, and to ask if they would be willing to be acknowledged by signage along the trail. Bob said that, besides the villages, William George is the primary property owner, along most of the section, but there are a couple of residents who can get involved.

The goal is to have folks walk or bike from each of the villages to the meet in the middle point, but some parallel parking will be possible along the Old George Rd. The LimeBike organization is on board to provide bikes at each of the villages. One need is to find a van that could provide shuttle service back and forth from the villages to the celebration site, for those who need it. Alice will check about the Dryden Rec Department van.

Plans call for passing out raffle tickets along the trail, which can be deposited in jars with drawings for various donated prizes at the celebration headquarters, where there will also be music, food trucks, ice cream and short speeches by various officials. Instead of a ribbon cutting as a celebration highlight, one suggestion was driving a golden stake at the half way mark of the trail section.

Susan generated a full list of possible activities at the celebration including games for kids, (such as a bean bag toss, face painting, matching games etc., a build a railroad lantern project using 3D printed components), a “map-my-walk” Facebook promotion, and on line bird identification activities. Other possibilities include an “adopt a pet” display by the SPCA, or a petting zoo. The hope is to involve youth groups like 4-H and scouts. Susan asked if there is a budget for the event. She envisions that event fundraisers could include selling some sustainable items, featuring the Rail Trail logo, such water bottles, water bottle straps, or hikers' backpacks made from re-used fabric. There was a question about whether there could be horse drawn wagon rides. It was decided that the trail surface wouldn't support this in early spring.

Advertising will focus on seeking sponsors and volunteers, and then on publicity for the event in newspapers, social media, list serves and radio. The first step will be a save-the-date message of the Friends of the Rail Trail list serve and on Facebook, along with a list of volunteer opportunities. Rosalie and Diane volunteered to help. Others who are interested can contact Susan at [Spa4@cornell.edu](mailto:Spa4@cornell.edu)

**Kiosk graphics update** – Diane, Chuck, Bob

The Design Committee met last week. Diane said that Chuck prepared some good text for the kiosks, which will be called “stations.” The one at George Rd will focus on George

Junior Republic (GJR) history. Trish Sprague, historian at the George Agency, met with Bob in the big original GJR house and is willing to share lots of photos for the kiosk. He said Larry Lipfert, Director of Facilities Services, took over from Pat Foote last year. The administration is very enthusiastic about the trail and the event.

Diane said the committee's goal is to have final versions of the kiosk graphics design and text by the March meeting. She added that the committee's work would produce a template for future kiosks that can go much faster.

#### **ROW Update – Bob**

Albert and Janice Volpini have signed an easement for two parcels on their property near Kirk Road. Bruno is working with four more property owners in that area.

#### **Trestle renovation plans and cost estimate – Bob (for Bruno)**

Bruno has reviewed the TG Miller engineering report on the condition of the two wooden railroad trestles between Game Farm and Stevenson Rds. Although the report indicated more rotting than revealed at the original DPW staff assessment, Bruno says he has developed a plan to try to renovate them to make them strong enough. Gary Bush, a structural engineer from Groton, has offered to donate a review of that plan, keeping in mind the standard that the bridge must be able to carry the necessary service vehicles, pedestrians, equestrians and bikers – but not the previous railroad train loads. This donated time will be documented as a match for the Parks grant. Nancy mentioned that she read in a farm bureau publication that there are new tools to measure weight load capacity. Todd said that linear transportation project permits are pre-approved under national standards.

Bruno said his “back of the envelope” calculation is \$48K for both trestle repairs. For the grant proposal, John K. used DPW estimates from Schug Trail Bridge at Keith Lane, which cost about \$30K each. The plan is that the trestle repair work can be done this summer.

#### **Applications for Tompkins County Parks & Trails Grant for municipalities And County Tourism Capital Grant – Bob, Todd, Alice**

##### *Tompkins County Parks and Trails grant*

Bob said he originally thought the Task Force might apply for this (up to \$5,000) grant for the crossing at Route 13 in Dryden Village. But when TG Miller estimates for planning and construction came in, the costs were higher than expected. Consequently, Dryden Town Planner Ray Burger suggested maybe DOT would include this in a future highway project.

Bob suggested the grant might be sought for other trail amenities, such as three more kiosks. Materials would be about \$5,000 for one at Game Farm Rd, Monkey Run Rd, and at the Parking lot near the Route 13 bridge over Fall Creek. He considered Mt. Pleasant, but we don't yet have area for parking there. All three are in the State Parks grant covered sections. At Monkey Run some fill would be needed to make a parking area. DOT permit would be necessary for the DOT owned section at the Fall Creek parking lot at Route 13. The County money is available to local municipalities for “shovel-ready” projects with a rolling application deadline.

##### *Tompkins County Tourism Capital Grant*

Bob and Todd met with grant coordinator, Martha Armstrong of TCAD, who encouraged the Rail Trail's application. She expressed a strong county preference to fund for major infrastructure elements rather than surface coverage. So the Rail Trail could structure the grant application to focus on the Route 13 crossing, as a match both for the State Parks and the TAP grant if awarded. Spend-out of funds from this grant is permitted over 3 years. Martha said the budget is lower this year than last, so it seems like approved

applicants will likely to get some portion of what they ask for. Bob also conferred with Peggy Coleman, at the Ithaca Tompkins County Convention and Visitors Bureau, about this grant opportunity.

There was discussion about a “Plan B” if the Rail Trail’s TAP grant is not approved. Asking for funds for work in the Etna trail section was discussed, but then it wouldn’t serve as a match for any other grants. Another Plan B option would be to ask for grant help for other bridge/trestle repairs and construction in the State Parks grant-covered section.

David said he also talked with Martha Armstrong about the Village of Freeville’s application for this same grant. He was told that they expected to receive at least 10-12 proposals for \$225,000, and now the total requests are likely to top \$400,000.

Todd noted that one of the requirements of the grant is to demonstrate how the success of this project will be measured. He said he has procured the trail data from IthacaTrails.org so we have two ends for the traffic level for those, and can compare usage with the Black Diamond Trail, which was on the top 10 web views last year. He suggested that web views could be seen surrogate for popularity among trail users. Using hits on different trail sites as a measure of use, it’s possible to compare this at no cost. This would give an incentive to keep the IthacaTrails.org website updated as new Rail Trail sections are opened. Bob noted that the national Rails-to-Trails Conservancy’s TrailLink.com and app already list Jim Schug and East Hill Recreation Way as two points of interest. Susan wondered about a “Map-My-Walk” campaign on Facebook, with DRT users being encouraged to post their hikes on social media.

#### **OPRHP Grant update – Bob and John**

##### *Documenting Donations of volunteer time and materials*

John distributed the spreadsheet that he created for the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) grant application. He said that the application listed trail sections, measured by feet, starting at Game Farm Road, so documentation of volunteer work and materials donations should be keyed to those demarcations. Bob said volunteer and donated work has been well documented, but it’s been harder to get DPW details about their work by section.

##### *Procurement policies*

John said he and Bob haven’t pinned down details about NYS procurement requirements with our local OPRHP rep, Kathleen McIsaac (of Etna). In an early meeting, she said they’d accept the Town’s procurement policies as the guidelines for trail purchases. This should become clearer when the final contract for the grant is signed. All easements had to be recorded with the County Clerk and approved by the Town attorney, and then submitted for OPRHP review in Albany before that contract can be signed. Bob said Kathleen told him she has no idea how long that review will take, or when the contract will be ready to sign. She is waiting for feedback from map people in Albany, and then she will meet with Bob and John and Alice.

In the meantime, John suggested that adding a space on all forms for recording volunteer time and materials donations to indicate section information. He reiterated the importance of collecting all staff and volunteer hours for the local match on the project, for example DPW chief Rick Young’s hours of construction supervision.

#### **New memorial bench donation – Bob**

A donation has been offered from the Adkins family for two commemorative benches, to be placed in the Etna trail section when that’s ready.

**Next meeting** – March 18 at Freeville Village Hall.

**Adjournment** at 8:34 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Alice Walsh Green