

Dryden Rail Trails Task Force & Friends
Working Meeting
June 22, 2016
Dryden DPW Building

Meeting Convened at 7:05 pm

Attendance: Bob Beck, Bruno Schickel, David Fogel, James Miner, Ray Burger, John Kiefer, Bard Prentiss, David Bravo-Cullen, Alice Walsh Green, Nancy Munkenbeck, Milo Richmond

Agenda

Introductions
Review Handout
Review Easement
List of landowners

Suggested Additions for Handout

(Bob presented formatted 6-page handout)

- URLs for trail information resources
- References, testimonials and real estate value facts
- Pictures of typical trail signage
- Links to studies of experiences with trails around the country

Discussion Items

Opposition to South Hill Trail extension

At a recent Dryden town board meeting, some residents spoke against a trail extension from the Six Mile Creek Natural area towards Brooktondale that crosses four different townships, including the southwest corner of Dryden.

Many adjacent landowners were concerned about an increase in crime if the trail is formalized. (It was noted that studies show more formal trails bring crime rates down.) An effort to build this trail was attempted in 2008, and stymied when a dispute arose over whether the tract is owned by NYSE&G or the adjacent landowners. NYSE&G currently pays taxes on the section.

Question re acquisition of the Schug trail. It was partly owned by the DEC, the Town acquired the remainder of the land for the trail.

Hunting on and near the trail

There will be signage during hunting season, caution to put dogs on leash, etc. Some hunting occurs off the Schug trail (ducks) but has not been a problem. (See discussions of hunting issues in previous minutes.)

Paving material and handicapped access

The trail will be primarily covered with stone dust, a gravel mix that packs down, allowing handicapped access. There's no intention to create a fully paved trail, but that wouldn't be ruled out in particular sections.

Suggestions for Changes to the Handout for Landowners

- Add more about the economic benefits to landowners along a trail. This needs to counter balance arguments that “property value will tank.”
- Add URLs for more info. (Ray said these could be added to the Town website within a couple of weeks.)

Comments/ Suggestions re: the Easement Document

- Remove sections 2d and 2e, and include any particular stipulations in a Schedule A instead
- If there is any mortgage on the property, protection for the easement (subordination) must be obtained from the mortgage holder. (This language isn’t included in the document, so the person approaching a landowner must bring it up.)
- There is a difference between conservation and trail easements. With conservation easements, a landowner may receive income tax breaks for the charitable donation of development rights. For a trail easement, tax breaks are not generally sought. Landowners won’t be encouraged to get an appraisal to find out how much they’re giving away, and the town won’t pay for it.
- To describe the easement right of way, it is hoped that we can refer to information in previous deeds and surveys recorded in the County Clerk’s office. This would save the expense of hiring surveyors or making elaborate descriptions of the rail bed. (Descriptions were sometimes vague when Mahlon Perkins sold the sections back to landowners.) The town attorney will have to decide if descriptions are adequate, and those negotiating with landowners will try to give an accurate description as a first draft.
- There was a discussion about getting volunteer help from a surveyor or attorney, with two names suggested by Milo.
- A lengthy model Trail Easement and commentary from Pennsylvania may yield additional details to cover in the Dryden document. Bob is studying it.
- The issue of Liability is important. NYS law helps protect landowners from suits by trespassers who are injured on their land. For the trail, the Town will also indemnify landowners.
- Todd will bring the Dryden Draft to Cornell attorneys for their review.

Review of Landowners List

Attendees worked from the trail section map and landowner list provided by the Ithaca-Tompkins County Transportation office, to identify specific landowners to approach first.

Properties considered important to approach soon to build momentum were listed as numbers: 8,4,19,18, 21, and 11. Bruno will contact the owner and manager of Varna LLC (#8, Lucente) and Brown, to begin talks about the trail.

When the Design Connect team contacted landowners along this section of the proposed trail, there was no significant opposition (other than the DEC Game Farm), according to Bob. There were issues raised from property owners east of Route 13.

It was decided to approach state elected officials Barbara Lifton and Jim Seward to enlist their help in negotiating with the Game Farm and the William George Agency about their respective sections of the trail. Bruno volunteered to contact Sen. Seward. Milo offered to help with Game Farm negotiations, unless Mary Ann Sumner is providing leadership on this.

The last meeting with the William George Agency management was some time ago; second hand word is that the new management is just as opposed to a trail on the property. There was a suggestion to connect with long time staff there for a read on how to approach management. As Mayor of Freeville, David could host a meeting with Agency officials, Bruno and Bob.

Fred Bonn from NYS Parks was mentioned as another supporter and resource. Ray asked whether a subcommittee was needed to apply for a NYS Parks grant, with the application due on July 31. However, it appears such an application must wait until all easements are in place.

Meeting adjourned at 9:14 pm

Next Meeting: 7 pm Wednesday, July 20 Village of Freeville Hall.