

**Dryden Rail Trail Friends and Task Force  
Minutes of the Nov. 16, 2016 Meeting  
Dryden Town DPW**

**Attendance:** Bob Beck, John Kiefer, Todd Bittner, David Fogel, Chris Tessaglia-Hymes, James Miner, Armin Heurich, Bruno Schickel, David Bravo-Cullen, Judy Pierpont, Dan Lamb, Alice Green, Nancy Munkenbeck

Meeting was **convened** at 7:05 pm

**Announcements:**

- Armin reported that the official opening of the Black Diamond Trail was Nov. 14.
- Jim noted that an article in the Cortland Standard announced the Town's rail trail grant application to the Department of Transportation
- Tompkins County is sponsoring an open house on a different trail, an extension of the South Hill Recreation Way. It's scheduled for 4-7 pm Tuesday, Nov. 29 at the Coddington Rd. Community Center. The proposed trail extension crosses the Southwest corner of the Town of Dryden, which supports this project. The trail would go through the towns of Ithaca, Dryden, Danby, and Caroline. Each town will have an information table at the event. Bob and Bruno both plan to attend.

**Town Board & County Legislature resolutions and many letters in support of our DOT/TAP grant application**

Bob said 18 letters of support and resolutions went with the grant, submitted on Oct. 20. Grant decisions should be public in late December or early January.

**Update on landowner trail easements**

Landowners along a large portion of the trail have pledged to sign easements, but many have not yet submitted them. It's been suggested that the town should have as many easements as possible in place before the grant stipulations would go into effect. Bruno noted that now is the time to put on a full court press to gather easements. The Town can receive and approve them at the December Board meeting. There is a difference of opinion about whether a hearing (with at least five days prior notice) is required prior to approval of the easements. Judy said the acceptance and approval of the signed easements at the December meeting is an opportunity to celebrate those landowners, and to spread the news about the trail project.

**Cornell request for treatment of Game Farm–Cornell driveway to compost facility  
- Todd, Bob & Bruno**

Todd said five of the six Cornell property easements are complete. The Cornell agricultural experiment fields and the compost facility, which share use of a section of the proposed trail in north of Stevenson Road at the Game Farm, have two requests before signing off on the sixth easement: 1) Dust control measures along an 1800 foot section of the trail used to transport waste to the Cornell composting station, possibly to be paid for by Town of Dryden. (This might be accomplished by using re-milled asphalt from Cornell parking lots to defray the costs.) 2) Erection of a 6-foot fence and vegetative barrier along the same section, to separate it from sensitive experimental fields. Town Supervisor Jason Leifer (and Bob, Todd & Bruno) is slated to meet with Cornell officials to discuss these requests. Bruno suggested that the fencing could separate truck traffic from the trail. The DEC/Game Farm owns a portion of this trail section. Next step: John Keifer will put together an estimate of costs of the road treatment and fencing requests.

### **Need to pursue DEC/Game Farm trail easement**

There are currently three areas at issue involving DEC/Game Farm properties.

- 1) The triangular section of ag fields north of Stevenson Rd. and west of the trail. DEC officials have estimated it may take a year to negotiate an agreement for this section with the Cornell.
- 2) The Dryden trail section on the old rail bed between Game Farm and Stevenson Road, plus 700' of rail bed north of Stevenson Road.
- 3) A bridge replacement by Tompkins County over Cascadilla Creek on Game Farm Road which may involve diverting the trail to go under the road at the bridge—and may require additional agreement with DEC.

Todd recommended a meeting with DEC representatives to discuss all three projects with all the stakeholders, including the County Highway Department, relevant Cornell officials, the towns of Ithaca and Dryden, Assemblywoman Barbara Lifton, and others. At the last meeting with DEC representatives nearly a year ago, State Sportsmen Caucus members pushed back against the trail proposal; they were willing to allow hiking, and interpretive signage, but not bicycles, because recreation is not included in the mission of the pheasant breeding operation.

Todd also wondered whether DOT grant money could be used for acquisition of DEC/Game Farm interests. Bruno and John K said there is little in the grant that could be applied to such an acquisition, and still cover other trails needs.

### **William George Agency permission**

Bruno reported that at their fall meeting, the William George Agency Board empowered the director to sign the trail easement once their attorney has completed his review. He and Bob met with surveyor Mike Reagan to identify how much land is needed to create a gradually sloped trail, enabling crossing at George Road. Bruno also plans a meeting with another nearby landowner who is ready to provide an easement.

### **Status of easements in other sections of the trail**

- Bruno expects to meet again with Steve Lucente, who owns half of the proposed corridor in a section at Mount Pleasant Rd.
- Bob had an office meeting and a site visit with Chris Olney of the The Finger Lakes Land Trust (owner of the Etna Preserve). They are in favor of the trail, but there is some question about the Preserve boundary markers along the centerline of the rail corridor.
- A section of the trail at Etna is at the rear of the Phoenix bookstore property on Rt. 13, which is in the process of being sold. Bob met with the owner who prefers us to wait; to approach the new owner about an easement.

### **Local fundraising and grant opportunities**

The grant proposal to the Department of Transportation calls for a \$169,000+ local share contribution. In-kind services from the town can be applied. Bruno suggested that the Task Force set a goal to raise the entire town share through donations, rather than using town taxes. He said this will 1) build great support for the trail 2) foster a high sense of local ownership 3) overcome objections from those who don't want to pay for the trail with taxes, and 4) provide a powerful argument to reluctant landowners along the trail. He cited the recent successful fund raising campaign for the Montgomery Park Playground.

The campaign for the Trail could include solicitation letters to families, businesses and foundations describing the benefits of donations. Sponsoring trail sections or amenities is a possibility. The sponsor-a-brick approach might not be appropriate for the stone dust trail, but

there may be opportunities at trailhead sections. There's a need for an excellent website to describe the project and its progress, and possibly sign up volunteers for various activities. Alice and Judy volunteered to reach out to the Friends of the Trail list serve to recruit supporters interested in helping with fund raising and marketing.

**The next meeting** was scheduled for 7 pm Dec. 14 at the Dryden DPW building

**Meeting Adjourned at 8:45 pm**

Submitted by Alice Walsh Green