

**Dryden Rail Trail Friends and Task Force
Minutes of the Dec. 14, 2016 Meeting
Dryden Town DPW**

Attendance: Bob Beck, Todd Bittner, David Fogel, James Miner, Bruno Schickel, David Keifer, David Bravo-Cullen, Judy Pierpont, Kyra Stephanoff, Paul Stephanoff, Dan Lamb, Alice Green, Nancy Munkenbeck

Meeting Convened at 7:06 pm. Bob welcomed Kyra and Paul, two new representatives from the Finger Lakes Cycling Club.

Report on phone conference with Cornell Real Estate and CU Government Relations personnel concerning approach to DEC/Game Farm– Todd, Bob, Bruno

Dan Lamb reported on a promising conference call with Cornell representatives on December 1. Participants included Bob, Todd, Dan, Kristin Gutenberger of Cornell's Real Estate Office, Glenn Evans, Director of Operations, CU Agricultural Experiment Station and Charlie Kruzansky, Director of Cornell Government Relations, in Albany. The conference call started with a review of the past history, and covered issues regarding proposed trail sections through the Game Farm and near agriculture experiment fields and the compost center. Cornell representatives seemed to support the project, and offered some ideas regarding other regional funding sources.

Dan also reached out to Ken Lynch, Deputy Commissioner at DEC in Albany to discuss whether there may be some way to solve objections to the trail from some Game Farm and Sports group representatives. Ken remembered the issues (formerly, he was Director of our DEC Region 3), and said that this might be a good time to discuss the proposal again. He noted that the new DEC Division of Fish and Wildlife Director, Tony Wilkinson, previously worked for the Nature Conservancy, and may be receptive to considering alternatives that would enable the trail. Ken agreed to bring the trail proposal to the new director. Dan will contact him to follow up within two weeks.

Bruno and Todd suggested that Dan remind the DEC officials that the Town of Dryden already has utility right of way along this section of the railroad bed, and that the Dryden Rail Trail is included in the Tompkins County Trails Plan, approved four years ago.

Report on Town Board approval of trail easements received to date – Bob

The Dryden Town Board is scheduled to accept eight signed trail easements from landowners at its Dec. 15 meeting. Notice has been posted in Ithaca Journal for Public Hearing at that meeting. Another easement has just been received, but too late to be included at the meeting. Of 28 parcels necessary for completion of Phase One of the trail (Game Farm Rd. to Route 13), 13 are already signed, eight more are pledged, and 6 more are in negotiation (of these, 5 landowners own to the centerline of the railroad right of way; the other half is Dryden-owned or easement has been signed.)

One Cornell easement is still in negotiation; talks continue about the Agriculture Experiment Station about their request for dust control, fencing and vegetation next to a triangle of experimental fields and leading to the Cornell composting operation.

Other landowner/easement progress – Bruno, Bob

Kyra suggested that bicyclists would appreciate if Phase One of the trail could extend all the way to Pinckney Road. Bob explained that the trail section included in the grant proposal to the Department of Transportation ends at Hall Road, but that's just two easements from Pinckney Rd. Work on securing these is already underway, and the trail can be extended, although without the stone dust surface, as soon as these are in place. Pledges have also been obtained for almost all the easements between Pinckney Road and Route 366.

Bob said work continues to get the final signed and notarized documents from several landowners who have pledged but haven't submitted them.

Bruno has talked with Steve Lucente about his Mount Pleasant property, and with representatives of the William George agency and an adjacent property owner, about crossing George Road at grade and the slopes necessary to bring the trail up to road level. The plan is to ensure that this section slopes gradually enough to allow ADA accessibility.

FH Fox Bridge Ownership – Bob

A DOT real estate specialist researched ownership of the bridge crossing Route 366, and found that the DOT acquired the two abutments on either side of the bridge in 1978. Their report said that two permits are required to use the bridge: a highway work permit and a use and occupancy permit. They have done regular inspection and maintenance on the bridge, so these are likely obtainable.

As part of the trail, the bridge might be used for some trail signage, large signs on each side of the bridge for motorists on the road below (maybe to include "F.H. Fox Bridge, Town of Dryden Rail Trail, Supported in Memory of Professor Fox by the Alumni and Students of the Cornell College of Veterinary Medicine") and possibly a welcome sign to Varna. Vet College alumni and students have expressed an interest in contributing to the trail to memorialize him.

Report on Open House (at Coddington Road Community Center on 11/29) for possible extension of South Hill Recreation Way – Bob, Bruno

There was large attendance at the open house, sponsored by the towns of Dryden, Caroline, Ithaca, Danby and Tompkins County. Ray Burger, Bob and Bruno were on hand to explain the difference between the South Hill Recreation Way extension and the Dryden Rail Trail.

Continue discussion: Means of enhancing community involvement and local financial support with the goal of raising the Town's matching share of successful grants (and more) without using tax dollars – Alice, Judy

Bruno proposed that the Task Force commit to a goal of raising the \$169,000 necessary to match the requested \$850,000 state DOT grant, without using town tax dollars. If the grant is approved, announcing the local fund raising goal at that time would be appropriate. There was some discussion about what can go into the local match. Town staff time and efforts can count for this.

Alice reported on fund raising approaches from the Montgomery Park playground project that might be applied to the Dryden Rail Trail goal. These could include:

Targeted Business solicitation – with hand delivered letters

Tiered giving options for trail amenities

Enlisting the support of local service groups like Rotary and Sertoma

Specific fund raising events, at locations along the trail
Working with schools to promote health benefits of trail use by students

Public relations and marketing tools needed for the project:
Ongoing press releases for reports on trail and fund raising progress
Creation of a website for soliciting volunteers and on-line donations
Maintaining a Facebook page for quick announcements and donor recognition
Signage along the trail route to promote donations
Teams to table at local events, and grab and go kits with trail literature to display

Other grant opportunities for the trail include: New York State Parks (request for proposals in the spring), and local funders, the Park Foundation, Community Foundation of Tompkins County and Legacy Foundation (of Tompkins County Trust Company).

Timeline for Fund Raising/PR efforts: Alice suggested waiting until after the holiday, when the decision on the DOT grant proposal will likely be received. Next step is putting out a call on the list serve, describing specific tasks and asking for volunteers.

New Tompkins County Trails Website Announcement

Todd announced the long awaited soft opening of the interactive trails site at <https://IthacaTrails.org>. Designed for use on smart phones as well as computers, the site allows for a search of trails by activity, difficulty, length, wildlife watching, lake views, gorges and waterfalls, etc. Town of Ulysses supervisor Liz Thomas, and Todd were leaders in the development of the site, which was funded in part by the Hotel and Conference Bureau. Formal announcement and events to highlight this new resource are scheduled in the spring.

Next meeting: Scheduled for 7 pm Wednesday Jan. 18, 2017 in the Dryden Town DPW

Meeting adjourned: 9:10 pm

Submitted by: Alice Walsh Green