

Dryden Rail Trail Friends and Task Force
Minutes of the Meeting, 7-8:30 pm Monday, June 15, 2020
Via Zoom

Attendance: Bob Beck, John Kiefer, Dan Lamb, Bruno Schickel, Chris and Diane Tessaglia-Hymes, Todd Bittner, Judy Pierpont, Nancy Munkenbeck, Alice Green, Rose Borzik, David Fogel, Loren Sparling

Call to order at 7:05 pm – Bob Beck, Alice Green
February minutes approved.
Addition to agenda: Bruno report on easements

Multi-Modal Grant update – Alice, Bob

The Town of Dryden has received word from the NYS Department of Transportation that a \$500,000 Multi-Modal Transportation grant has been approved for the Town. The majority of the grant, coordinated by Assemblywoman Barbara Lifton, will be applied to costs of building the pedestrian bridge across Route 13 near Varna.

Posting of COVID-19 signs – Diane, Susan, Bob

Diane created, Susan laminated, and Susan & Bob posted new signs along the open sections of the trail, with trail rules during the pandemic.

Construction of roofs for new kiosks – Bruno

Progress continues on trail amenities. Bruno has provided materials and overseen completion of roofs for seven new kiosks, destined for intersections along the western section of the trail from Route 13 to Game Farm Road.

Call for kiosk graphics content (Varna community & history, Fall Creek watershed, Monkey Run natural history, Cascadilla Creek etc.) – Diane, Bob

With the kiosk structures in progress, there's a need for photos and information about each community the next sections of the trail will cross. People who are interested in researching local history and descriptions of natural areas, and/or collecting photos for the kiosk displays should contact Diane or Bob. Simon St.Laurent has kindly provided useful info and photo sources for Varna history.

Ten benches to be installed – Bruno, Bob

Another trail installation project to be scheduled when possible: Assembly and installation of 10 new benches, delivered last year to the Town Recreation Department storage building.

Game Farm Road 3-way MOU update – Alice, Bob

Dryden and Ithaca Town Supervisors met with the County Attorney and Highway Department Chief and agreed to go forward with a three-way memorandum of understanding (MOU) drafted by the county and modified by Bob Beck. The MOU spells out responsibilities for each municipality in the planning, creation and maintenance of an at-grade crossing of Game Farm Rd. Retired County Highway engineer John Lampman has volunteered to provide the plan for the intersection, and Town of Ithaca

Supervisor Rod Howe is working with an engineer at B&L of Syracuse, to approve the plan.

TAP Grant / Erdman Anthony contract update (Subcommittee: Bob, Todd, John K, John L, Bruno, Dan, Alice, Ray)

The Town of Dryden has approved the contract with Erdman Anthony to build the pedestrian bridge crossing Route 13, and the state has committed the funding. The subcommittee will schedule a meeting next month to prepare for a kick-off session with the EA engineers and Region 3 NYSDOT.

Update on DEC Game Farm / OPRHP EPF conflict – Bob, Dan

Work on opening the Trail section through the Game Farm, including restoration of two trestles, has been halted by DEC's reversal on its stewardship agreement that authorized the renovation. Instead, DEC engineers insisted on replacement of both trestles, and there has been no reply to appeals.

The NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation rejected the 3-year stewardship agreement as inadequate to meet the requirements for the Environmental Protection Fund grant awarded to the Trail in 2017. This is the only agreement rejected in the complex process of getting state approval for the many trail ROW easements for the EFP grant.

Finger Lakes State Parks Regional Director Fred Bonn offered to try to broker negotiations with DEC that would allow the EFP grant work to go forward, but three months have passed with no progress. The Town has been unable to claim reimbursement for any of its work under the grant over the last 2 1/2 years, because of the holdup on contract signing.

Bob and Alice met with Assemblywoman Lifton to brief her on the situation, and she offered to apply political pressure if needed.

Dan asked the Task Force to hold off on public pressure till the end of June and allow him to make one more appeal to the DEC officials with whom he worked to forge the original stewardship agreement.

Application for County Parks & Trails Grant – Bob

Bob reported that he had applied in the 2020 cycle for this grant, but he is uncertain whether the county will be able to fund grants this year. David F. said he was informed that the Parks and Trails grants for local municipalities have likely been eliminated from the 2020 County budget because of the severe revenue losses during the pandemic.

Easements Report – Bruno

Bruno said he continues to be hopeful about working out easements or workarounds that will enable the trail to connect from Freeville to Etna.

July meeting: Scheduled for 7 pm July 20, 2020. Venue to be announced based on COVID restrictions at the time.

Adjournment at 8:30 pm

Respectfully submitted by Alice Walsh Green