



TOWN OF SWAMPSCOTT

RAIL TRAIL DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

ELIHU THOMSON ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
22 MONUMENT AVENUE, SWAMPSCOTT, MA 01907

MEMBERS

RYAN CONNER, CHAIR
MARCI BENSON, VICE CHAIR
KIM NASSAR, CLERK
MICHAEL HAMILTON
MARY ANN O'NEILL
ALEXIS RUNSTADLER
RALPH SOUPPA

OCTOBER 11, 2017 MEETING MINUTES

Time: 7:01pm – 8:48 pm

Location: Swampscott Senior Center, First Floor Conference Room, 22 Monument Avenue

Members Present: R. Conner, M. Benson, K. Nassar, M. Hamilton, M. O'Neill, A. Runstadler, R. Souppa

Members Absent: None

Others Present: Pete Kane (Director of Community Development), Laura Spanthanas (Liaison of the Selectmen), Naomi Dreeben (Board of Selectmen Chair), John Hendrickson (Stantec/Project Manager), Aleece D'Onofrio (Stantec/Project Engineer), "Citizen" (wouldn't provide name)

Mr. Conner opened the meeting at 7:01 pm.

REVIEW AND APPROVE MINUTES FROM 9/25/2017

Mr. Conner asked the Committee if they had any comments or questions related to the minutes from the September 25th meeting. Ms. Runstadler asked Mr. Kane to explain a phrase in the draft minutes. With no other questions or comments from the Committee, Mr. Conner made a motion to approve the minutes, which was seconded by Ms. Runstadler, and unanimously agreed to by the Committee.

DISCUSSION WITH STANTEC

Mr. Conner welcomed Mr. Hendrickson and Ms. D'Onofrio from Stantec Consulting to the meeting, and noted that the Committee had questions related to the schedule and community engagement sections of the firm's RFQ response that they wanted to discuss in addition to the presentation. Ms. D'Onofrio led the discussion, noting that the presentation was substantively similar to that which was previously provided to the Board of Selectmen.

Stetson Avenue

Although out of scope for the current project, Ms. D'Onofrio noted that connecting Stetson to the Swampscott Commuter Rail Station would be a good future project. It was also noted that there may be challenges with ADA accessibility at Stetson Avenue. Additionally, Ms. D'Onofrio discussed the challenges with earth removal along train

tracks, and that any earth removed should stay within the utility corridor as soil contaminants are not unusual in such areas.

Paradise Road

With respect to the crossing at Paradise Road, Ms. D’Onofrio noted substantial coordination with National Grid will be required as well as MassDOT. Additionally, Ms. D’Onofrio briefly discussed bridge options at this location, noting that National Grid will require the bridge at this location to have an H25 load rating. There will be no street-level trail access.

Middle School

Acknowledging that the utility corridor goes through the middle of the parking lot, Ms. D’Onofrio noted that alternatives will need to be evaluated for this location. There is also an educational opportunity at Muskrat Pond that could be a trail feature. This area has known wetlands which will also need to be evaluated. Ms. D’Onofrio showed a visual example of how a trail could be routed around a ball field.

Humphrey Street

The crossing at Humphrey is challenging due to skewed alignment, and Mr. Hendrickson noted the difficulty the design team had crossing at this juncture. Ms. D’Onofrio discussed the need for a pedestrian crossing, and shared a visual example of Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons as one option. They outlined that standard perpendicular crossings will be needed such that users may cross Humphrey St at Phillips Avenue and then another across Phillips Avenue to enter the trail. Mr. Hamilton inquired about an underground tunnel at this location, though it was noted as being expensive and requiring substantial ramping.

Corridor-Wide

National Grid requires field wire measurements; Stantec has the equipment to gather the measurements. National Grid uses the data collected to run a variety of testing, including worst case line sag scenarios. Mr. Souppa asked Ms. D’Onofrio to confirm with National Grid if any changes are expected with respect to National Grid wires and poles. Ms. D’Onofrio shared visual examples of signage and site furnishings that could be used on the trail.

Right of Way (ROW) Process

ROW work will be completed by the Town of Swampscott. Typically, the process involves title research, the results of which are then reviewed by Town Counsel, and then Town Counsel makes a recommendation to the Board of Selectmen. Ms. D’Onofrio outlined three potential methods for the ROW work:

1. Using existing Valuation Maps
2. Recording easements at road crossings – this would require a professional land surveyor and cost \$10-15k
3. Recording easements on each individual property – would cost approx. \$30k

Mr. Kane stated that Town Counsel has not yet determined which method will be used. Mr. Souppa noted that temporary construction easements may also be needed. Ms. D’Onofrio offered to bring a surveyor to a future meeting to answer any questions if the Committee thought that would be helpful.

Public Participation

Ms. D’Onofrio noted that each community is different, and that Stantec will mold the format of the communication plan around the community and based on the Committee’s input. The Committee discussed ideas for public participation in the design at length, including the use of design charrettes. Charrettes provide an opportunity for data gathering, both positive and negative. Stantec has found that an open house format whereby residents can “drop-in” during certain hours tends to work better than a formal presentation format.

Ms. Nassar requested that the abutters be identified as “super stakeholders”, and as such, that abutters be given an opportunity to comment on the design charrette prior to the general public.

The Committee discussed and agreed that the term “Trail Neighbors” should be used in lieu of “abutters”.

Schedule

The Committee discussed the project schedule at length, with Ms. D’Onofrio commenting that the utility coordination with National Grid is expected to be heavy and may slow the process.

It was confirmed that surveying will be done by aircraft (rather than a drone), and is expected to occur after the leaves fall in late November/early December. Given the timing of the aerial survey, it was agreed that data collected in 2007 would be used for the design charrettes. With respect to wetland flagging, the Town will need to request Point of Entry Access from some residents in advance.

Mr. Kane noted that there are 160 Trail Neighbors, four of which are businesses (Tedesco Country Club, National Grid, and two gas stations). The Committee discussed the Site Walk, and Mr. Kane stated that the Town would need permission from National Grid prior to the Site Walk, and that Trail Neighbors would be provided notice as well. The Committee engaged in discussion regarding various methods for reaching out to Trail Neighbors (e.g. letters, phone calls, email groups) and for keeping them informed as the project progresses. Mr. Conner suggested that the same notification process to Trail Neighbors be used regarding wetland flagging.

The Committee and Stantec discussed potential dates for the design charrettes, and agreed to the following:

- November 7th – Trail Neighbor Design Charrette
- November 9th – Swampscott Resident Design Charrette

There will be another opportunity for interaction with Trail Neighbors prior to the design team’s submission of the preliminary design to the Town.

The preliminary design is expected to be completed by February 2018 – this will give the town time to complete the land acquisitions, which need to be completed prior to the town applying for any grants. The Committee discussed balancing communication regarding the plans for the trail with continuing the momentum towards making the trail a reality.

ACTION: Mr. Kane will schedule a Site Walk in October.

ACTION: Stantec to provide an updated project schedule to Mr. Kane.

ACTION: Mr. Kane will post the updated project schedule on the Town’s website.

Construction Costs

Mr. Souppa noted that some town residents are concerned about the cost of the trail; Ms. D’Onofrio noted that the construction costs will be estimated as part of the preliminary design. Mr. Kane noted that there are many grants available, and that there is no specific time period, or grant “season”, for applying. Rather, each grant has its own stipulations and timeframes.

As a general matter, Mr. Kane will share information from the design team with the Committee, and will also post such information to the Town’s website.

Deliverables

The Committee and Stantec discussed the expected deliverables, which include the Preliminary Design, Estimated Construction Costs, and the Method of Easement (which is to be determined by Town Counsel).

Additional Discussion

Mr. Souppa asked if the road at Stetson could be raised to reduce the grade at that location. Ms. D’Onofrio and Mr. Hendrickson will research the possibility.

Ms. Nassar raised engagement with Trail Neighbors, citing language from the RFQ response that suggested providing positive feedback from other communities regarding questions about crime, litter and privacy. Ms. Nassar suggested that Trail Neighbors would be more interested in mitigating measures (e.g. fencing or vegetation to mitigate privacy issues) rather than hearing about the experiences of other communities, and suggested that visual examples of such measures be available during the design charrettes. Ms. Runstadler further commented that Trail Neighbors will be interested in the details, such as what might happen to a particular tree, and that is the level of engagement needed.

There being no other questions for them, Ms. D’Onofrio and Mr. Hendrickson left the meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mission Statement – Following on the Committee’s discussion at the last meeting, Ms. Runstadler proposed language for the Committee’s Mission Statement. The Committee discussed various word choices, with Mr. Souppa making a motion, seconded by Mr. Conner, and unanimously agreed to by the Committee, for the following Mission Statement:

To support and assist the Town of Swampscott and Stantec Consulting Services in the engineering, design and construction of the future Swampscott Rail Trail.

ACTION: Mr. Kane will submit the Committee’s proposed Mission Statement to the Board of Selectmen for their consideration and approval at the October 25th Board of Selectmen meeting.

NEXT MEETING

The Committee discussed regularly scheduled meetings to be held on Monday nights. The Committee also discussed potential agenda items for the next meeting, including:

- Status of Trail Neighbor outreach (related to the Trail Neighbor charrette session on November 7)

- Discussing ideas for what the Committee expects from the design charrette meetings

Committee members then reviewed their schedules and determined the following meeting dates: October 23rd, November 20th, and December 18th.

The Committee discussed attending the Site Walk, with several Committee members noting that it would increase their knowledge of the trail to participate. Mr. Kane explained the intricacies of Committee members attending the Site Walk (notably, if a quorum of members is present, the Site Walk would have to be noticed to the public and meeting minutes would need to be taken). Ms. Runstadler inquired if stakeholders from other town Committees will be on the Site Walk.

ACTION: Once established, Mr. Kane will circulate the date of the Site Walk to Committee members.

ACTION: Mr. Kane will reach out to the stakeholders of other town Committees regarding participation in the Site Walk.

Meeting adjourned at 8:42pm.

K. Nassar

Clerk, Rail Trail Design and Construction Advisory Committee