

Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes

April 7, 2022

Meeting Held via Zoom

Call to Order

- The April 7, 2022 meeting of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Advisory Committee (“BFRTAC”) was called to order at 7:02PM by co-chair Nat Welch

Attendees

- BFRTAC Members: Nat Welch, Richard Fahlander, Adrienne Boardman, Dorcas Miller, Sam Stearns, Tracy Hansen, Marybeth Barker
- Town Representatives: Marcia Rasmussen, Director of Planning and Land Management and Matt Johnson, Select Board Liaison
- Members of the Public: Approximately 5 members of the community joined
- Recorder: Adrienne Boardman

Approval of Meeting Minutes

- A motion was made to approve the March 17, 2022 meeting minutes and seconded
 - The March 17, 2022 minutes were approved unanimously by roll call vote

Town Update Memo: Marcia Rasmussen presented the monthly project report, which is incorporated as an addendum to the meeting minutes.

- Phase 2B
 - MassDOT Resident Engineer Michael Winnick provided an update on March 25th which stated that the landscaping subcontractor continued work on March 28 with loaming and seeding to address the stabilization comments; the camera traps for the wildlife monitoring were installed March 4 and the tracking pads the week of March 28; due to the sloped hillside and location of cemetery markers at the top of the slope on the northerly side of the trail at STA 48+25 and the relatively flat, level area on the south side of the trail (Warner’s Pond/Gerow Park side), MassDOT contractor have asked the Town to consider relocating the rest area (8’ by 21’ paved area with 2 benches) which Marcia approved.
- Phase 2C Updates:
 - BFRT Sub Committee met on April 5 with Town staff from Police and Concord Public Works to discuss the various scenarios to date and listen to their comments and questions.
- Last ½ Mile

- The Town has not yet heard back from MassDOT regarding the granite mile markers and the interpretive signs or about the additional funding/financial assistance identified in last month's update
- Marcia has reached out to MassDOT regarding the encroachment of the existing house at 70 White Ave and is now waiting to hear back from for the best contact information for MassDOT Rail Division to discuss further
- The White Pond Advisory Committee submitted a letter to the Select Board recommending that the proposed 5-foot opening in the fence between the rail trail and White Pond to allow access to existing trails be closed; This suggestion will be discussed by the Trails Committee and the Natural Resources Commission for input to the BFRTAC at the next meeting in May.
- Phase 2D Sudbury
 - No update information available on the Town of Sudbury web page; Marcia to connect with the Sudbury Project Manager to determine updates
- Community Connections Grant
 - The work will be scheduled for this spring with installation required prior to May 31; Marcia to connect with Public Works following Patriots Day to identify a target date
- Concord Prison Cemetery
 - Meeting held on March 23 with members of Concord Prison Outreach and others (including Richard Fahlander) to discuss possible fundraising ideas.
 - The next step is to get estimates for features of the project and prepare two documents that will help in grant writing and seeking contributions for the project
- Tracy Hansen asked for clarification on the maps posted to the Town website and whether they show the current work underway on 2B; Marcia confirmed
- Nat Welch asked for confirmation that the fencing topic is now with Natural Resources and that the BFRTAC should await further information before continuing review of the topic; Marcia confirmed

Committee Business

Junction Park Conceptual Redesign

- Nat Welch reviewed the charge set forth by the Select Board; Marcia indicated that any comments emailed from the public up to April 1 have now been posted to the BFRTAC section of the Town website and that comments submitted since April 1 will soon be posted

- Tracy Hansen provided an update from the Sub Committee including an overview of what has been completed since March meeting including an overview of the April 5 meeting with Town Staff and an overview of the key themes of feedback received
- Tracy Hansen encouraged the BFRTAC to spend time rethinking the short-term concept this evening and come to a consensus so subsequent meetings can focus on long-term
 - Acknowledges that the original short-term proposal was not well received and there were concerns raised about limited space for non-trail users, the perception of encouraging speed, and detracting from the attractiveness of the Park
 - Expectations of short-term perhaps need to be re-evaluated to focus on encouraging the safe and shared use of the park
- Tracy Hansen walked through “Concept 8” for the short term which focuses on planters sprinkled throughout path to create visual line (chicane approach); add more seating to reduce speeds and deter crossing by rail road; “Concept 9” shows long narrow planters to create a visual line for rail trail traffic pattern and create a barrier prior to tracks
- Tracy Hansen introduced “Concept 10” which address feedback and concerns and focuses on keeping the park open and locating planters in front of train tracks to discourage crossing; new signage would incorporate language that Junction Park is a shared space and to encourage safe shared use
- Nat Welch discussed how Concept 10 came to be and how current signage can be construed as “negative” and has not been successful, but perhaps instead could be used to encourage careful use; holds all users accountable; emphasized his “ah-ha” moment was how we can help encourage individuals to take responsibility for their actions and behavior in the park
- Adrienne Boardman expressed support for Concept 10 and feels it addresses the safety concerns but doesn’t go overboard in re-engineering the park space in the short-term
- Dorcas Miller also voiced support of Concept 10
- Richard Fahlander expressed support of the underlying concept and suggested that we also look at reducing signage that isn’t beneficial and focus on areas that won’t dilute the new message; encouraged an assessment people coming from the North; commented that this plan reduces the likelihood that someone would be installed and need to be redone later for the Long Term Plan
- MaryBeth Baker also prefers Concept 10 and the effectiveness of signage; encouraged incorporation of images and visuals over words; apply concept of the “Slow Children Play Here” signs that help to slow down drivers
- Sam Stearns was supported of the concept and raised the question about the users approaching from the North side to echo Richard’s comments
- Adrienne Boardman supported MaryBeth’s comment and agreed that there should be an emphasis on using words and images that will help encourage why the correct behavior is important (ex: entering pedestrian zone) to help explain why safety is paramount
- Tracy Hansen raised the question of whether Concept 10 helps to clarify where the BFRT trail turns clearly enough; Nat Welch highlighted that the Town can take the concepts

and then work with Town staff on the specifics (focus on messaging, planters to discourage railroad crossing)

- Marcia referenced the planters in the pedestrian seating area by Concord Teacakes as a success story
- Matt Johnson (21 Winthrop Street) raised a question about the accessibility factor around the planters and also ensuring the pathway for commuters isn't blocked or viewed as an unnecessary obstacle
- Sallie & Bill Satterthwaite (297 Law Brook Road): Appreciates the ingenuity and thoughtfulness of the Concept 10 approach; suggests that planters are oriented sensibly; Bill supports the shift to positive messages in the signage and notes how the successes (or issues) observed from a sensible short term approach can help inform what needs to be factored into a longer term concept
- MaryBeth Barker emphasized shared responsibility between bikers and pedestrians, everyone is accountable
- Motion to use Concept 10 as a recommendation for the short term and to have the Town Staff do an initial review
 - Seconded and approved unanimously by roll call vote

Trail Count Program

- Nat Welch presented an overview of why trail counts are conducted and a review of the 2021 trail count in town; the 2022 trail counts are targeted for the week of May 10 (10th-15th) at 3 locations: Nashoba Brook Bridge, Rte 62 Crossing, and Powder Mill
- Nat Welch provided a summary of the BFRTAC role in the trail count program and asked for volunteers to help coordinate volunteer outreach, coordinate with FoBRT, and onsite coordination (asked of Committee volunteers to reach out to him)
- Nat Welch introduced the concept of automated trail counters and the technology and mechanisms in use in other areas today; data can be downloaded automatically and it can detect modes of users too; explained that FoBRT have indicated a willingness to consider a grant request;
- Tracy Hansen asked if there are any downsides; Nat Welch said that none came to mind
- A motion was made to approve working with FoBRT on a grant to support automated trail counters (specifics to be determined)
 - Approved unanimously by roll call vote

Member Questions & Comments

- Discussion around next meetings including the possibility of a site walk to review the Concept 10 for the short term and also discuss which long term plans should continue to be pursued
- Nat Welch indicated that the MBTA meeting is scheduled for April 20; Committee discussion around having a Sub Committee Meeting at Junction Park the week of April 25 followed by the BFRTAC meeting on May 5; a larger site walk could follow once long term plans are narrowed down

Correspondence and Public Comments

- Cynthia Katz (20 Conant Street): Acknowledged that she was not in attendance earlier in the meeting but expressed concern that while the Rail Trail and Park are shared spaces the Park often gets deprioritized to bikers needs; Asked for clarification who is ultimately making a decision as to what plans get implemented; Nat Welch explained that the BFRTAC will make a recommendation to the Select Board and decision making authority sits with them; Tracy Hansen encouraged Cynthia to listen to the recording to review concepts discussed earlier in the meeting

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30PM.

Next meeting on Thursday, May 5 @ 7:00PM