

Merrymeeting Trail Committee
Wednesday, December 17, 2014
Meeting Notes

The meeting convened at 9:00 a.m.

Attending:

Nicole Briand, Bowdoinham; Ruth Indrick, KELT; Carrie Kinne, KELT; Victor Langelo, Topsham; Andy Hendrickson, KRRT; Tom Reeves, Richmond; Linda Christie, Access Health; Victoria Boundy, Richmond; Jon Edgerton, Wright-Pierce; Steve Musica, Richmond; Bob Bruce, Merrymeeting Wheelers; Frank O'Hara, Planning Decisions



Board of Supervisors

- 2 meetings about interlocal agreement have been held
- The group is close to agreement on a draft that can go back to the towns for review
- The group will meet in January to check in and make sure the draft is set
- January/February = figure out a town by town strategy based on the feedback and approval needs of each town
- Nichole will send a copy of the draft to members of the Merrymeeting Trail Committee

Capital to Coast Brochure

- Brochures are printed and on hand to be shared with towns, businesses, and interested people
- Contact Ruth if you need any to distribute

MMT Interim Route Signs

- Ruth has drafted a letter to the town administrators to explain the current status of the project and the DOT approved signs
- Ruth and Nichole will communicate to figure out how the letter should be signed and to coordinate with each town about approval of the DOT approved sign locations
 - communicate that DOT has approved the route and sign locations
 - determine if Nichole or town representatives on interlocal agreement group sign letter
 - would be good to have each town sign to approve DOT site locations
 - because agreement that is being shaped gives each town the autonomy to decide the trail route in their town section

Topsham

- No change since last meeting (although there was an article about the trail project in the Forecaster this past week)

A2K

- Carrie and Ruth will meet with Andrew Deci to get updates this coming Monday
- A2K design/engineering is on the A2K work list
- Jon reports Wright Pierce is working with the city of Bath to design pedestrian use on North street near the 5 way intersection

KRRT

- Victor presented information about the Merrymeeting Trail at the KRRT annual meeting last week
 - Shared poster of map/brochure, but unfortunately the brochures were not printed yet
 - Nichole has noticed that there are more MMT facebook likes over the last week from people who live in KRRT area
- Andy will bring copies of the brochures to the Augusta city council meeting where KRRT is making a presentation of art

Other

- Steve presented project to Friends of Merrymeeting Bay board at last meeting (he is on the board)
 - He will share the brochures at the next meeting
- Sand on the rails mentioned
 - Used for the Sunrise Trail
 - Average cost just small portion of cost of trail beside tracks
 - Augusta has sand and blacktop on old tracks = an inactive line
 - Gardiner did not approve sand on tracks = section where it was discussed is under lease
- Board of Supervisors could advocate for the trail when active
- There is \$15,000 remaining to be used from the 2014 Elmina B. Sewall Foundation grant we received
 - For community engagement and determining next steps

Economic Development Study Discussion

= how best to use remaining Sewall funds from this year and to identify needs for Sewall application for next year

- Frank O'Hara of Planning Decisions introduced to help lead discussion = long-time advocate for KRRT, has done economic development studies for other projects
 - pointed out that local hospital in Augusta is using trail opportunities in the area as a selling point when trying to attract new doctors to the area
 - economic development study use in legislature
 - when a study with a lot of numbers is presented to legislature, it is talked about for short period with press conference, then mostly forgotten
 - Frank suggests better use of \$s could be to create list of potential users, leaders, benefactors, and benefiteres
 - raise awareness with local meetings and studies
 - at end, have group of people we can mobilize
 - product would build support community wide
 - coffee shops, bike shops, businesses with health initiatives
 - could have our info include/sell ads for shops
 - can help give people ownership over trails
 - Tom points out that his community needs a 'game changer'
 - wants study to show how trail can be the engine for this
 - share success stories of other towns, other trails
 - way to bring success from coastal Maine inland
 - example of success story

- Quebec and Fredericton, New Brunswick
 - trail was Fredericton's game changer
 - they have case studies, #s showing impact there
 - locally - difficult for people to think that the trail would actually make a difference
 - many people from local area see the river as there, but don't see it as remarkable
 - new people = see river as awesome, a great value
 - how convince people that river corridor is valuable in a number of ways?
 - potential role of economic study
 - a method of reaching a different constituency and bringing them on board
 - perhaps some of the naysayers
 - having something specific for this trail that shows fiscal benefit
 - could resonate with some constituents
 - getting local input
 - interviewing locals, people identified as 'local leaders'
 - ask their input, interest
 - conduct interviews, talk with community members
 - interviews can lead to support as people/leaders may support trail and become advocates for it if their input is sought for it
 - identified importance of telling the story of the trail, making it a narrative, tugging at people's heartstrings
 - why are we unique, what makes us special
 - waterfront access as selling point
 - impact on jobs
 - why people want to move places, impacts on housing
 - value of and for clean river
 - what will trail create for region
 - quality of place benefits
 - unique economic resource for this area = farms
 - are drawing in the young demographic
 - identify benefits for towns
 - not a 'bean counter' study just reporting out numbers
 - have list of benefits with discussion of benefit impacts
 - for each benefit (ex = real estate, housing prices, health, economic) include:
 - stories and information for how trails have impacted other places - not #s based, to illustrate the benefits
 - possible 1 sheet per benefit
 - health, economy, river access, etc.
 - easy resource to share
 - people relate to stories and examples, not to #s
 - benefits can be used to sell trail so it becomes a narrative instead of a focus about only dollar costs for sections
- Goals for the study:
 - tells a story to people

- has facts/data that show this could make a difference
- builds mailing/contact/interested constituent list
- feeds into/lays foundation for a subsequent grant
- Potential 1st Step
 - build constituent list
 - interview local leaders
 - gather relevant case studies from other trails (at least 10)
 - ex: Quebec, East Coast Greenway sites, Eastern Trail (John Andrews),
 - assessment of communications capability
 - communications plan/strategy (quick memo)
 - social media strategy, supporters audience, skeptics audience, how do we message our name
 - Frank O'Hara will submit proposal to KELT within next week or two
 - remaining funds from 2014 Elmina B. Sewall Foundation grant can support this
- Potential 2nd step
 - expanded report
 - video
 - The Northwest Arkansas Razorback Regional Greenway has a great video example
 - 2015 application to Elmina B. Sewall Foundation will focus on the 2nd step

Plans for next meeting:

- Discuss work plan
- Discuss role of this group
 - identify how to formalize role and structure of this group (has been in existence for 8 years)
 - role example = building constituencies

Meeting adjourned at 10:30 a.m.

Next meeting: January 28th at 9 a.m.

Submitted by R.I.