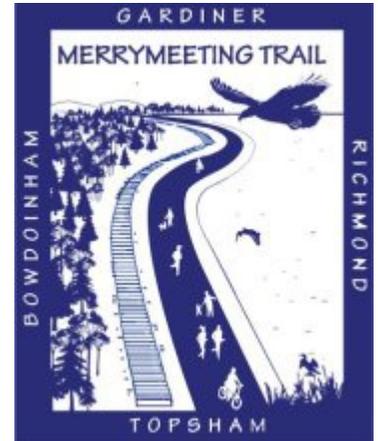


Merrymeeting Trail Committee  
Wednesday, September 30, 2015  
Meeting Notes

The meeting convened at 9:00 a.m.

**Attending:**

Victoria Boundy, Richmond; Ruth Indrick, KELT; Carrie Kinne, KELT; Tom Reeves, Gardiner; Colleen Fuller, Access Health; Victor Langelo, Topsham; Carol Eyerman, Topsham; Jeremy Cluchey, Bowdoinham; Angela Twitchell, BTLT; Sarah Curran, Planning Decisions



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**Discussion of the Opinion Leader Survey**

**Who it targeted:**

- goal of getting information from people who may or may not be interested
- not bike-ped people (because they have already been an important part of the conversation)
- is some concern that it may not have done as good a job of targeting negative people as we hoped
  - they may have said no to interviews

**Purpose:**

- Hone our message to meet community values, needs, and concerns

**Discussion of results:**

- people were balancing cost vs. nostalgia for rail vs. future opportunity
- If it was not identified as a high priority, the identified problem was the costs.
- part of the conversation focused on local trail sections and their importance as well as a discussion of the railroad coming back
- people view the greatest benefits of the trail as:
  - place for healthy people/healthy families
  - safe place to exercise or be outside
  - economics and jobs were not highlighted as important in relation to the trail
    - people did not connect the trail with jobs and the economy, social capital for the trail was not identified
    - people don't want to see changes in towns - don't want massive economic change that would change the rural character of the towns
- agreement that we should aim to ground the message for the trail in what people say and what people identify as things they care about
- impacts of the trails that people identify
  - tourists and visitors will come
    - people identify this as something that will happen, but they don't identify it as either a positive or a negative
  - town residents will be healthier
  - support lifelong health/all ages
    - some people stress all ages as important in several aspects of this survey

- safety
  - people saw + and - to safety
    - + = safe place for people, children especially, to exercise
    - = could be an unsafe place where teenagers congregate
      - could address this fear by sharing experiences from other trails - how the increased number of people on the trails has been found to increase safety
- abutters/adjacent property owners
  - importance of having them on board was stressed. need to consider best ways to work with them
  - reducing #s of abutters where possible will make this easier

#### **Messaging based on results:**

- messaging that meets identified priorities:
  - improving community health through safe transportation and active recreation
  - improving community, a gathering place
- connecting trails with other things that are going on in the individual communities and other places that are important in the communities
- marketing the trail and the community - farms and rivers
  - agrotourism potential with the trail, use trails to support resources that already exist in communities and community character that people care about
- strategy piece is important- and how construction strategy will tie in with communication
  - local vs. distance with communication and planning
  - how to message about the different options for construction methods

#### **Future meetings:**

1. Communications meeting where Charlotte, a contractor with Planning Decisions, will present on her communications assessment for the trail at the MMT meeting in October (see below for date and time)
2. We will have a special meeting that will focus on trail location, the phasing plan, different options for trail construction methods, cost differences, and rules surrounding making these decisions
  - meeting will take place in early November
  - those who are interested will set a date by email or at the October meeting
  - resources for studies that have already been completed include:
    - Wright Pierce Planning Study: <http://merrymeetingtrail.org/planning.html>
    - Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc.: <http://merrymeetingtrail.org/files/Merrymeeting%20Trail%20Feasibility%20Study%20June%202011.pdf>

Meeting adjourned at 10:10 a.m.

**Next MMT meeting: October 28<sup>th</sup> at 8:30 a.m. in BOWDOINHAM**

Submitted by R.I.