

**MERRYMEETING TRAIL
MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, AUGUST 10, 2009 AT 11:00 A.M
BOWDOINHAM TOWN OFFICE**

Present:

Andy Hendrickson, Kennebec River Rail Trail Board
Lynne Sanford, Bowdoinham resident
Nicole Briand, Bowdoinham Planner
Rich Rothe, Midcoast Council of Governments
Rod Melanson, Topsham planner
Tom Reeves, Gardiner resident
Steve Musica, Richmond resident
Victor Langelo, Topsham resident

1. Subcommittee Reports

Corridor Study. Rich Rothe reported on the results of the August 4 field trip along the 33 miles of State-owned rail line between Gardiner and Topsham. Four people made the trip on MaineDOT's Hirail truck: Jeff Beecher (MaineDOT), Cheryl Parlin (MaineDOT), Andy Hendrickson (retired MaineDOT engineer and on the Kennebec River Rail Trail Board), and Rich Rothe. Rich reviewed a series of pictures taken that day that were mounted on boards. There are many sections with good potential, especially four areas with double tracks. There are also many challenges including steep banks, narrow distance between the rails and Route 24 (mostly in Gardiner), and a number of narrow railroad bridges over streams and wetland areas.

Organizational Structure. Victor reported that the Estuary Land Trust might be able to be an advocacy group for the Merrymeeting Trail project. He plans to meet with them to check on possibilities. He reported that the Ning site is up, but some people still haven't joined.

Tom Reeves stated that he has collected a number of background documents from the Kennebec Rail Trail effort. These are good reference documents for our effort – we don't need to reinvent the wheel. We can tailor these to our needs. One difference is that the Kennebec Rail Trail benefited from having a major city (Augusta) with an engineering department that took the lead in a number of areas including construction, managing funds and doing maintenance.

Victor reminded the Group of the agreement at the last meeting to keep the group informal for the time being. At some point we will need a formal board. Nicole suggested that it makes sense to lay the groundwork for forming the board so we're ready when we need it.

Tom suggested the organizational group might want to consider meeting with the Kennebec Rail Trail Board. In his meetings with communities, he has told towns about the Merrymeeting Group, so outreach is already occurring.

Tom pointed out that maintenance is an important issue. On the Kennebec Rail/Trail, the four communities divide maintenance costs evenly. That has worked well but may not be the best approach along the Merrymeeting Trail. It might be possible to get MaineDOT provide some maintenance – they are providing some maintenance money for the Sunrise Trail.

Maintenance along the 6.5 miles of the Kennebec rail/trail is not expensive. Costs can be about \$1,000 per mile with no snow removal, and \$2,000 to \$3,000 with snow removal. The Friends of the Kennebec Rail/Trail do some in-kind work such as sweeping and trimming. Poison ivy removal was done by a licensed applicator.

Public Outreach. The issue of a web site is still up in the air. Rod reported that the Topsham web site is not available for the Merrymeeting Group.

2. **National park Service River, Trails and Conservation Assistance Grant application.** Nicole reported that the NPS application has been submitted. There were a total of 12 applications including five extensions and seven new applications. The NPS will be looking to assist several efforts. We should know by October.
3. **Logo.** Action on logo ideas was postponed due to the small meeting turnout.