

Merrymeeting Trail Committee
Wednesday, May 2, 2018
Meeting Notes

The meeting convened at 9:00 a.m.

Attending:

Ruth Indrick, KELT; Victor Langelo, Topsham; Tom Reeves, Gardiner; Nichole Briand, Bowdoinham; Carol Eyerma, Topsham; Jeremy Cluchey, Bowdoinham; Todd Woofenden, Signal Light Advanced Web Development



Web Update Discussion

- Todd identified options that he could provide for updating the website. He works in the Drupal platform. It is open source, provides database storage, and can be scaled to include whatever information we need. It integrates with Mailchimp, and we could use Paypal or Stripe. It could also do sign-ups. Todd could set up a map page that we could connect photos, images, or business information to. Todd could provide quarterly backups and security checks for a retainer fee.
- There are three pieces to developing a new website:
 1. Building with colors, designs, and themes (Todd could do this)
 2. Designing the site content (Merrymeeting Trailblazers members would be responsible for this)
 3. Hosting (Victor is willing to continue hosting the site)
- Todd will work up a proposal and send it to Jeremy.
- Victor can manage security and updates for the website.

Planning for 2018 MMT Open Farm Day Tour

- We will be hosting an Open Farm Day Bike Tour again this year in Bowdoinham on Sunday, July 22nd. The longest ride will start at 10am, the moderate length ride will start at 9:30, and the shortest ride, which will be a ride to several Forever Farms, led by staff from Maine Farmland Trust, will start at 11. Ruth will work with Caroline at MFT to schedule the joint ride. Victor will schedule the routes for the other two rides. MFT and Merrymeeting Trailblazers will both advertise the rides. Nichole is finalizing the open farm and art schedule.

Trail Progress

- Conversations with local legislators
 - Tom Reeves spoke with Gay Grant in January. She is on the transportation committee but will be retiring at the end of the year. She lives in South Gardiner beside the proposed trail route and supports trails in Gardiner.
 - Victor Langelo spoke with Denise Tepler. She was very supportive of the trail. She is on the appropriations committee. She was interested in finding out more about rail conversion.
- Option for covering the trail – Tom Reeves spoke with Lionel Cayer who is Augusta's city engineer. Based on over thirty years of experience, he believes that MDOT's design

specifications should be amended to eliminate the requirement for filter fabric since he has found that its use offers little utility in protecting the rail. It would save in trail costs since it is very expensive to place.

- Updates on Gardiner trail projects
 - Gardiner is focused on the Cobbossee Stream Trail. The first phase of the trail is being constructed by MDOT from where the Kennebec River Rail Trail ends in Hannaford's parking lot. It will extend along Maine Avenue, cross Cobbossee Stream on a new pedestrian bridge, and proceed upstream along the Arcade parking lot to the Bridge Street bridge. Plans call for this part of the trail to be constructed in 2019-2020. The remainder of the trail from Bridge Street to the wooden railroad trestle is being developed by Gardiner as a locally administered project.
 - As part of the planning for the Cobbossee Stream Trail, MDOT conducted a public hearing in August, 2017. At that hearing several people spoke in favor of using the rail line from the Gardiner-Randolph bridge to Waterfront Park because it is a safer route for bicyclists than Maine Avenue with its three busy entrances to Hannaford's. MDOT declined to adopt this alternative since they were so advanced in their design process. They did suggest that it might be considered as a future project. If this 1,100 foot section were built it would provide a direct connection between the Kennebec River Rail Trail and the Merrymeeting Trail. There was a unanimous vote by all those present to encourage MDOT to fund building the trail by either covering the track or removing it for this section due to its importance, and the vote also supported following the same policy on the Merrymeeting Trail from Waterfront Park to the Gardiner -Richmond town line.
- Update on Augusta trail projects
 - The extension of the Kennebec River Rail Trail from Memorial Bridge to Waterfront Park is under construction.
 - The City of Augusta acquired as a gift from the Kennebec Land Trust a 164 acre tract of land which includes the 479 foot summit of Howard Hill. The city plans to use this conservation area as a municipal park. In January it released a multi-resource management plan which envisions a network of several miles of trail. The longest trail would be a four-mile loop trail incorporating the Kennebec River Rail Trail, the Statehouse grounds, Howard Hill, Stevens Commons in Hallowell , and down Granite Hill back to the rail trail.

To Do

- Ruth will send the rail-trail report to meeting attendees.
- Tom will connect with Gay Grant and Tom Harnett of Gardiner to discuss the South Gardiner section of trail.
- To do at next meeting: brainstorm ways to connect with BCM and raise awareness of MMT
- To do: Connect with John Williams (ED of BCM) about Merrymeeting Trail

Meeting adjourned at 11:00 a.m.

Next Merrymeeting Trailblazers meeting: Wednesday June 20th at 9 a.m. in Topsham

Submitted by R.I.