

**MERRYMEETING TRAIL
MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, JULY 13, 2009 AT 11:00 A.M
BOWDOINHAM TOWN OFFICE**

Present:

Amanda Bunker, Wright-Pierce
Amanda Hopkins, Access Health/Healthy ME Partnership
Allison Vogt, Bicycle Coalition of Maine
Ben Long, Bowdoinham resident
Carrie Kinne, Kennebec Estuary Land Trust
Ian Jerolmack, Bowdoinham resident
Linda Edgerton, Bowdoin resident, Maine Downtown Center
Lynne Sanford, Bowdoinham resident
Rich Rothe, Midcoast Council of Governments
Rod Melanson, Topsham planner
Ross Nason, Kennebec Valley Council of Governments
Steve Musica, Richmond resident
Victor Langelo, Topsham resident

1. Introductions

Challenge Grant funding. The Midcoast Council of Governments received a \$20,000 Regional Challenge Grant from the State Planning Office. These funds will be combined with money from MaineDOT (exact amount not yet determined) for the feasibility study. Jeff Sneddon, Rich Rothe and Rod Melanson will meet on July 15 to refine timelines, deliverables and work schedules.

Future Meetings. It was agreed that future meetings will be held on the second Monday of the month at 11:00 a.m. More meetings will be called if necessary; meetings will be cancelled if there is no need to meet. Meetings will be kept short out of respect for everyone's busy schedules.

2. Preliminary Planning

1. Status of Workgroups

Organizational Structure. The workgroup met on June 30 to review documents from the Kennebec River Rail Trail Board of Supervisors, and also discussed the Eastern Trail and Sunrise Trail structures. All these projects have a management agency and a non-profit friends group. Management structures vary – we're not sure what we'll ultimately need. Recommend the current, loosely organized committee for the short-term. It has great flexibility. It doesn't require adherence to state laws governing inter-agency organizations. There are minimal reporting requirements. There was general concurrence.

A non-profit advocacy organization will be needed fairly soon. A new one can be formed, or the group can use an existing one. This group can perform the advocacy and lobbying role that would be politically difficult for the management group. The Kennebec Estuary Land Trust might be able to fill that role - Carrie Kinne will check with her board.

One of the organizational tools needed is a roster of players, their positions and roles. Rich or Nicole will provide.

Corridor Study. Several members will tour the corridor with officials from MaineDOT on August 3, and will use maps and GPS to outline a broad-brush concept plan. Rod and/or Rich will provide the committee with initial impressions at the next meeting. A retired engineer who worked on the Kennebec River Rail Trail has expressed an interest in working on this project. This could significantly reduce costs of the feasibility study (some initial estimates were \$120,000 or more – far more than anticipated funding at this time). The Mountain division Plan can be used to help fill out the process and technical portions of the feasibility study.

There is a need for a standing committee to guide work on the study.

Marketing. Most of the discussion centered on creating a web site:

- Ross reported that Josh Platt has established a Merrymeeting Trail link on the KSWCD.org website.
- Victor reported that he can set up a site on NING (a free service) for committee purposes. The consensus was that he should proceed.
- It was generally agreed that we need a website for the general public. Rod agreed to check on whether a public website can be established without a municipal contribution.

2. Status of Funding

Challenge Grant. These funds need to be spent by December, so getting a contract with SPO and starting the work will be a challenge. It is not yet clear whether the SPO-funded portion of the study can be undertaken first.

MaineDOT funds. Total potential funding for the committee’s work has not yet been determined, but MCOG and KVCOG have received some money for their work on the trail initiative. Additional bicycle/pedestrian funds may become available this fall, but the amounts have not yet been determined.

CDBG Program. According to the director of the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program, Merrymeeting Trail would not be eligible for grant assistance.

3. National park Service River, Trails and Conservation Assistance Grant application

The grant application deadline is August 1. Ben Long is working on the application narrative. We need assistance with the following sections:

Section 3 – we need to specify the project partners’ existing and anticipated roles. If this isn’t included in the support letter, an emailed sentence or two would be very helpful.

Section 6 – we need a map of resources (trails and preserved land) in Topsham.

Nicole has Attachment Divider pages ready and will package the application for delivery on July 27.

Status of Support Letters. Nicole has received a number of letters. The following are still needed:

- Topsham Conservation Commission (contact is Rod Melanson – he hopes to have letter later in the week)
- Kennebec Estuary Land Trust (contact is Carrier Kinne -she hopes to have letter later in the week)
- Brunswick-Topsham Land Trust (contact is Rod Melanson – he is working on it)
- Maine Downtown Center – Linda Edgerton will check on status
- Kennebec River Rail/Trail Board (contact is Tom Reeves or Jason Simcock)
- State Representative Carrie Prescott – Victor spoke with her, she will send email; contact Victor if email not received)
- State Representative Steve Hanley – (contact is Tom Reeves)

Other Groups. There are several other groups that should be contacted:

- Friends of the Kennebec River Trail (Allison will contact Dave Auclair)
- League of Yong Voters (Allison to contact)
- GrowSmart (Linda will contact)
- Friends of Midcoast Maine (Ben will contact)
- Bike-Pedestrian Committee of Brunswick

Several people reported that the National Park Service may undergo a reorganization; this could have an impact on the Merrymeeting Trail initiative.

4. Other Business

- Ben Long will be checking into whether there are foundation grants that could be used to support the work of the committee.
- Allison would be interested in public advocacy.
- Rich and Ross will be discussing coordination between MCOG and KVCOG