

**MERRYMEETING TRAIL
MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 2010
BOWDOINHAM TOWN OFFICE**

Present:

Amanda Bunker, Wright-Pierce
Andy Hendrickson, Kennebec River Rail Trail Board
Jason Bird, Midcoast Council of Governments
Jason Simcock, Gardiner City Planner
Jon Edgerton, Wright-Pierce
Lind Christie, Bowdoinham resident
Lynne Sanford, Bowdoinham resident
Nicole Briand, Bowdoinham Planner
Rich Rothe, Midcoast Council of Governments
Steve Musica, Richmond resident
Tom Reeves, Gardiner resident
Victor Langelo, Topsham resident

Corridor Study

Rich reported that VHB is working on the Corridor Study and that the Midcoast Council of Governments (MCOG) has requested that a draft of the final report be provided by September 30 to allow sufficient time for the Merrymeeting Group to review and comment on it.

Funding

Rich gave an update of various funding sources:

- SPO Challenge Grant (\$20,000): Funds were received by MCOG, and VHB submitted two invoices at the end of June for the full amount;
- Outdoor Recreation Heritage Fund (\$13,500): Funds have not yet been drawn down;
- MaineDOT (\$20,000): Funds have not yet been drawn down;
- Other (\$5,000, including \$1,000 each from Friends of the Kennebec River Rail Trail, Gardiner, Richmond, Bowdoinham, Topsham): Funds have not yet been drawn down – the intent is that these will be the last funds to be used.

Pending Applications

- Richmond's Quality Community Program Application: Nicole reported that the application seeks \$1.5 million to build a little over a mile of trail in the village. About 70% of the cost (\$900,000) is for a retaining wall at Mill Brook. There may be an alternative to building this wall.
- Maine Community Foundation: Nicole reported that this application is still pending.
- USDOT – Tiger II Planning Grant: Rich reported that August 23, MCOG submitted a \$450,000 grant application for preliminary design work on the Merrymeeting Trail.

Summer Events

- Victor reported that at the Maine Bike Rally, the Board handed out newsletters describing the work on the Merrymeeting Trail.
- Tom reported that Augusta Trails, a very pro-active group, is currently building a 17-mile Mountain bike/cross country trail. The goal is to eventually link to the Kennebec River Rail Trail. The Friends of the Kennebec River Rail Trail and Augusta Trails went to banks and other potential donors for money. Potential donors like banks are concentrated in the larger communities like Augusta.
- There was a general discussion of the need for getting an entity to undertake advocacy on behalf of the Trail.

Next Steps – Organizational Structure

Jason Bird introduced himself as the new MCOG staff person and stated that his work experience with the Eastern Maine Development Corporation gave him the skills to provide a wide range of services to the Group including grant applications, fundraising, managing grants, and overseeing implementation. General discussion:

- MCOG is currently the fiduciary agent for the feasibility study grants;
- A lot will depend upon whether or not the Merrymeeting Trail is designated a trail of statewide significance;
- All of the Merrymeeting Group's funds are for the feasibility study. The Group currently has no funds for other types of activity;
- There is a serious concern about whether or not MCOG has the legal authority to undertake fundraising (Jason said he would get back to the Group on this);
- It's very difficult to find a funding source that will support writing grant applications and fundraising;
- There may be a need to update the agreement in the coming months;
- More public input is needed;
- The Kennebec Rail Trail Board consists of nine people. Maintenance costs are split evenly by the four towns, even though trail mileage varies greatly. A private contractor is hired to plow the trail.
- Organizational structure issues will be taken up and considered at length in the months following completion of the feasibility study;

Other

- The revised logo is now on the web site;
- LIDAR flights are now underway for an area two miles out on either side of the Kennebec River.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned about 12:30 P.M.