

Rail Trail Advisory Committee
Weston Town Hall
March 11, 2019

Committee Member Attendees: Paul Penfield, Chris Stix, Gail Palmer, Ellen Freeman Roth, Phyllis Halpern, Mark Horowitz, Anne Benning, Mike McCarthy, Eli Mather, Eric Rosenthal

Not Attending: Meg Kelly

Guests: Chris Fitzgerald (Recreation department), Mark Romanowicz (751-761 BPR 40B proposal), Lars Unhjem (Managing Director of Mill Creek Residential) , Jim Beams (Weston 300), Ed Recka (TAG)

- 1) Approval of Feb. 25th minutes: approved
- 2) **Citizens Comments:** none
- 3) **Presentation of 751-761 BPR 40B Proposal** – Mark Romanowicz provided presentation of building plans for the 751-761 Boston Post Road 40B proposal. The Board of Selectmen have asked RTAC for any feedback we might have as a group relative to the proposal and building plans and its potential impact on the Rail Trail. Mark's goal of his presentation: Seeking any questions or comments from RTAC that would go to the selectmen. He introduced Lars Unhjem with Mill Creek. Lars/Mill Creek is the developer while Mark is working with Mill Creek through permitting processes & design. Mark manages the relationship with Lars and Mill Creek, given Mark's experience with Highland Meadows. The property is under a purchase and sale agreement. Mark provided an updated map and drawing of building plans. All the buildings were designed south of the wetlands. Buildings consisted of 2 ½ story mid-rise units and 2 story townhomes. Hoping to create berms to create screening to BPR as well as to the trail if needed. Trying to keep building profiles low. All buildings represented as being on the southerly uplands. Still trying to determine if the back parcel is buildable. Says buildings on southerly uplands would not be visible from rail trail. If building on back parcel a buffer of some sort would need to be created between the buildings and the rail trail. Mark says there is a difference in opinion between he and Lars about whether or not to build on the back parcel. It is still on the table. If they build on the back parcel there would be fewer units in front by BPR. The total number of units would remain the same (180), but building would be split between the two parcels. The potential exists to create parking for the rail trail but is not in their designs at this time. May be challenging to create such parking within the community on the south side vs if buildings were built on back parcel. Still need to discuss with WFTA about obtaining permanent easements to access to trails into perpetuity. Committee agreed that we should respond to the selectmen in writing if they have asked us for feedback on the building plans. Mark Romanowicz suggested it is a bit of a hike to get water out closer to the rail trail, if they were to develop a comfort station close to the trail.

After the presentation the committee talked amongst themselves and agreed that building on the back parcel is a concern. There were also concerns expressed about site lines for that area. Building on the back parcel would significantly change the character of the trail in that area. We need to communicate the value of that stretch of the trail. That section is a jewel of the trail, very pristine and isolated, more so than any other spot on the trail. It would be hard and a bit unreasonable to retrofit screening for that section of the trail, which currently needs none given

its existing natural state and natural beauty. Concern was expressed about potential additional traffic and any additional policing issues given 180 units on the property. Committee still questioned whether or not the buildings in the section closest to BPR would be visible, even though Mark Romanowicz says it would not be visible. We could request site lines from the developer for various points on the trail to help assess the visibility concerns. Suggestion was made to state our concerns and present requests relative to each concern. If this, then that, for example. There was continued discussion about the potential of a comfort station. If built the developer/community should be responsible for servicing it. Access would likely be via Gun Club road for servicing. Still no group consensus on whether or not a comfort station should be built. If we really felt it would be useful, we could get creative with the design to minimize the concerns around the visibility of the comfort station. Committee would like to explore with the developer the potential of a comfort station within the context of our concerns as noted above. Important to communicate that RTAC has heard citizens' concerns around parking & trail access, therefore we would request that the developer continue to work with the town, the community and abutters to reach an agreeable solution regarding such concerns.

- 4) **Report and discussion on benches** – Mark H communicated with Paul Janhige regarding our previous discussion about benches. Paul J thinks the trail is not rural enough to warrant the log benches. This is his personal opinion but he is not formally against it. He is willing to go forward with the will of the committee/community. Mark H. told him there was sentiment moving toward granite benches at the 2 main trail heads, but logs on the other locations along the trail. Paul Janhige is Ok with this as long as benches are accessible. Chris Fitzgerald says of the recreation commission the majority were in favor of mixed benches with granite at main trail heads and logs along at the 3 other locations. According to Jim Beams, Weston 300 is adamantly opposed to the log benches. Weston 300 has 20 pieces of granite in storage, many of which came from the Sears estate. It would be fitting to have this material brought back along the trail. Some fabrication would be needed to create the benches or the granite could be used for the platforms. The RTAC group was mixed – 3 voted for all granite (at main trail heads as well as along the trail), 3 voted for mixed (granite at 2 major trail heads and logs at the 3 other locations along the trail), 1 voted for all logs, 2 non-voting members, 1 abstainer/no strong opinion. Everyone was in agreement for granite at the two main trailheads, but mixed opinion about bench type at the 3 additional locations along trail. Chris Fitzgerald said the Recreation Committee was 4 to 1 vote on mixed. Weston 300 was 2 out of 3 for granite, 1 for mixed. RTAC committee decided to table the final decision about what to use at the remaining 3 locations.
- 5) **Update on Eversource and vegetation clearing** – Paul provided an update: He submitted the RDA for screen planning Thursday of last week to ConCom. The subject is on agenda for the Conservation Commission meeting mtg March 26th. Regarding the proposed used of herbicide by the Lewis Company, who are under contract with Eversource: Paul's feelings were that they have been careless in the past - prior to the paving of the trail, but not sure how things will change with the paving trail and railings in existence now. Perhaps they'll be more cautious and careful. Tom Cullen did an excellent job at the tailgate meetings to communicate the responsibilities of the various parties involved. Paul wants to make the recommendation that we advocate that Lewis Company participates in the tail gate meetings if the timing overlaps with the construction and maintenance on the trail over the summer. Motion approved for such recommendation. Apparently the company reserves the right to use the herbicides, although it

doesn't say they will. ConCom is limited in their ability to over see or manage use of herbicide by such company on the DCR land. Mark H will be sending ltr to DCR regarding concerns and statement not to damage historical artifacts along the way as well as plantings/railings etc. during construction.

- 6) **Update on meeting with Police Chief and ACO** – Anne provided update – Although not a written plan, the police has a plan to police the trail and are fully supportive of helping manage issues, if/when needed. Rachel Hoffman, ACO (Animal Control Officer) stated any dog issues should be communicated to the police. Police Chief was also supportive of people contacting them regarding any issues. They have on staff 2 bike trained officers, and a motorcycle. Regarding signage and issues, Anne suggested to have something along the lines of “see something say something, call X# for the police” at the two main trailheads. Technically the rail trail is the jurisdiction is state police, but it will fall on the local police. Police Chief is prepared to respond and manage.
- 7) **Update on signs and kiosks** – Gail and Anne met with Emily at ConCom. Although she wants to update the signs around town, it is a project that will not be completed anytime soon. It is expected that RTAC move ahead in advance of ConCom/Town creating new signs. That said, Emily did express a preference for the flat panel design (Anne had examples). Emily discussed the cons of plexiglass kiosks. Recycled plastic kiosks do look nice but cost about \$1,200. Anne drove around this past weekend and looked at examples of signs at a wide variety of parks and conservation properties in the broader area. What it comes down to is: How to manage the balance of cost, convenience and durability. The suggestion was made to send out to the group examples of signs in advance of next RTAC meeting. The Signage task force will also do some additional research into material costs and ideas for messaging and language on the signs so that at a future RTAC meeting we could discuss and/or vote on a direction for signage at the two main trailheads. Anne/Meg/Gail will set up a signage task force meeting to discuss the above prior to the next RTAC meeting. Side note: Gail to send image of East Coast Greenway signs to Mike McCarthy to share with traffic & sidewalk committee.
- 8) **RTAC logistics for spring** – MarkH will be out of town in part of April and May. Gail will help with scheduling the meetings, creating and posting the agenda, and overseeing the general meeting(s). Paul will represent RTAC at the tailgate meetings during construction, collect and represent residents' concerns at those meeting, and report back to RTAC, Chris will represent interests of RTAC throughout the construction progress at the two trail heads, as well as report on any budget updates/concerns etc.
- 9) **Other new business** - none
- 10) **Decision re: meetings for April 8th and 22nd**. Mark will still be here for April 8th and it was agreed that April 8th would be the next meeting. The group will decide April 8th if an April 22nd meeting is necessary.
- 11) Motion to adjourn