

Approved: February 27, 2015

## **TOWN CENTER COMMITTEE MINUTES JANUARY 23, 2015**

The meeting was called to order at 12:03.

**Present:** Nelson Disco, Peter Flood, Bill Wilkes, Chris Ortega, Mary Hendricks, Karen Freed and Jackie Flood and Lelia Mellen. **Excused:** Finlay Rothhaus

**Minutes:** Minutes of November 21 were approved as read.

**Town Council Presentation:** Nelson made a presentation to the Town Council for the Annual Review on December 18, 2014, detailing the Committee's progress on implementing the Committee's charge. He reported that this year's focus has been on 2 of the recommendations from the iTRaC study: Safe Routes to School Study and improvements to the Souhegan River Trail. The Nashua Regional Planning Commission did a survey and a study for the middle school and high school area, which is part of the Town Center. A committee was formed which received a great deal of input from parents, school administration and teachers. The takeaway from the study was that walking and biking to school is beneficial to the students and should be encouraged.

Federal funding was supported by the State through the SRTS program. The program is now combined with some other programs and consolidated into the Transportation Alternative Program (TAP), which is administered by the State Dept. of Transportation (NH DOT). The TAP fund received about \$30 million in requests for funds from across the state for \$5 million in available funds. Nelson reported that the Town Center Committee had an application in place.

He then spoke about the Souhegan River Trail which, when finished, will extend from Watson Park to Wildcat Falls along the river. He spoke about the old sluiceway going under Chamberlain Bridge, the trail connecting with the footbridge across the Souhegan

Approved: February 27, 2015

and continuing to the Falls. The Town has acquired ownership of all the property the trail is on. James Jolly built a small wooden foot bridge this year for his Eagle Scout project. Trail markers were placed along that section of the trail, while some portions of the trail were moved from the very edge of the river. The school cross-country team has been using some of the trail this year. The Committee will be designing a sign to be placed on the footbridge across the river which will describe Merrill's Marauders and identify the bridge named for them.

Nelson said that he hoped for a connection from the Sluiceway to the School District land. The Committee with the help of Kyle Fox of the DPW has applied for TAP funds to build the other piece of trail on the west side of the Chamberlain Bridge that will connect over to the School District land.

Some survey work has been completed this year using donated funds and a National Park Service grant. A reserve account has been established for this purpose. He reported that the Committee recommends that the town establish a Capital Reserve Account for sidewalks, recommended in the Master Plan.

### **Old Business:**

Safe Routes to School: Chris Ortega attended a webinar on Nov. 18 with the National SRTS. They discussed practical applications of SRTS. They concentrated on the "Hartz Ladder of Municipal Participation" which describes 8 "rungs" on which #1: youth being manipulated to do something; #2 : there is a committee, but inactive; #3: there is a committee that is non-participatory; #4: the youth are kept informed and given tasks; #5: youth are consulted and informed; 6: the adults initiate activity, but youth are considered ; #7: youth are active with adults; #8: youths are highly participatory.

The leaders of the initiative in Wisconsin described activities that led to better understanding and participation of kids, like seminars on bicycles and bike safety.

Karen Freed said that for years Jean Mazzerola ran a program of bicycle safety and ran a bike rodeo which Merrimack students benefitted from.

The Wisconsin high school determined that of all pedestrian accidents in the school area, most involved people under 20. The school started a campaign involving posters, text messages, trivia, gift cards for winners, a "train the trainer", and a simulated cross walk in the school hallway. The trained upper class students would then train the younger kids. The posters were quite eye-catching, like a tire tread superimposed across a face, and sayings at the bottom like, "pedestrians don't have airbags."

These training sessions are scheduled carefully keeping the kids' schedules in mind. Kids love incentives like gift cards and swag. Chris asked what their recommendations were for K - 6, but their experience is with older grades. They would like his input as Merrimack's program goes along.

The "bike and walk to school" days have been very successful. Walking/bus days encourage parents to monitor the walk routes and also get parents to assist in bus arrival and departures. There are opportunities to explain the programs: orientation at the beginning of the school year to ask for volunteers for example.

Nelson asked where the money would come from? Chris replied that , in addition to implementation, SRTS money had been organized under TAP funds by the state. The application was due by Dec. 6; minimum needed is \$200,000, maximum is \$800,000. Self funding should be \$40,000 - \$60,000.

Even though the programs as suggested and described would not meet the minimum cost, some road markings that don't meet minimum requirements could be added to the program, especially on Bishop St. and certain side streets where kids would be walking. Keech Nordstrom estimated \$60,000 - \$100,000 to pave O'Gara Drive. This additional work could wrap into the painting jobs and add up to enough for the grant money. Chris suggested adding some of our projects into the application. It would be good to get a list ready to go with estimates of all our projects. Chris would be interested in work on Baboosic Lake Rd. at Indian Rock,

the bridge over the highway, the intersection at Church St., at Hillside Terrace, and a D. W. Highway sidewalk extension. The bridge near Wire Rd. is dangerous.

### **TAP Application:**

Nelson reported that it was announced today that the Transportation Alternative Program as awarded the Town of Merrimack: \$530,000 to extend the Souhegan River Trail under the sluiceway and up into school property. This is federal grant money to be administered by NHDOT. The funds will be involved with the whole trail, used for professional planning and construction and executed by the criteria of the federal grant process.

The Merrimack PWD will probably subcontract the engineering and construction work. Under the Federal Rules, the state asks for applications to bid. Contractors are selected based on qualifications. If the resultant final bid price is too high, the next best contractor is selected.

### **Results of Discussion with Fire Chief:**

Chief Currier is 100% in favor of a trail going into and through the parking lot of the Central Fire Station, but wants no parking in their lot.

### **Merrill's Marauders Sign:**

Karen said that she has found a lot of information by researching Merrill's Marauders There were 6 sections of combat teams: each had a color; the shield has 4 of the colors. Some form of the shield was used many times and seems to be a very central piece of their identification. In recognition of the Chinese and Burmese soldiers who fought with the unit, Chinese and Burmese Stars were put on the shield. The star was a symbol of power and force that the units put into their incursions. The men were made up of soldiers from many different units to make up one trained in jungle expeditions. The sign text could be edited down, but have the website printed on the sign for further information.

Approved: February 27, 2015

Peter said that the sign should be attached to the rails of the foot bridge so people can see the Marauders' bridge from the foot bridge.

Nelson suggested having other explanatory signage as the trail goes along. For example, if the trail construction removes certain concrete structures, we could have a sign with a picture of how it looked before.

Lelia will further edit the proposed Merrill's Marauders sign to lessen the words.

### **Other Business:**

Lelia passed out pictures of different rustic bridges and footpaths. We briefly discussed merits of rustic bridges and larger, more sophisticated bridges.

Jackie will man a table at the Winter Carnival with maps and charts, and have a handout of a trail map to show people how to get on the River Trail.

Lelia told us that the National Park Service is turning 100 this year. There is a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts encouraging public participation in parks. She thinks an Art in the Park event sponsored by the Town Center Committee would be a natural fit. There is a recorded webinar about the guidelines of the grant: \$10,000 - \$100,000, application submittal deadlines are Feb. 19 and July 23. Lelia and Jackie will look further into the possibilities for a Merrimack grant. See more at: <http://arts.gov/grants-organizations/art-works/grant-program-description#sthash.EVBWLHTIt.dpuf>

Deb Huffman sent information on a Boy Scout looking to build an outside classroom near the trail for an Eagle Scout project. After some discussion, the consensus of the committee was that it might not be an appropriate spot. It will be up to the School Board to make the decision. Karen will look for someone good at graphics to do signage for the trail.

Feb. 27 is the next meeting. We adjourned at about 1:30