

Approved: November 15, 2012

Posted: November 16, 2012



Town Council Meeting Minutes



Thursday, November 1, 2012, at 7:00 PM, in the Matthew Thornton Room

Chairman Mahon called the meeting of the Town Council to order at 7:00 p.m. Present at the meeting were Councilor Boyd, Councilor Dwyer, Councilor Flood, Councilor Harrington, Councilor Koenig, Town Manager Eileen Cabanel, and Finance Director Paul Micali. Vice Chairman Rothhaus arrived at 8:05 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Mahon led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Announcements

Tuesday, November 6th is General Election Day. Polls will be open from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. The single polling place is the Merrimack High School gymnasium. The Mastricola Upper Elementary School and the church locations will not be utilized. Please enter the High School building through the entrance directly in front of the parking lot, which is handicap accessible.

Town Offices will be closed on Monday, November 12, 2012 in observance of Veterans Day. The Town Council has amended its regular meeting schedule for the months of November and December to the first and third Thursdays. Meeting dates are as follows: November 15, 2012, December 6, 2012, and December 20, 2012 at 7:00 p.m. in the Matthew Thornton Room.

Halloween trick or treating has been postponed until this Sunday, November 4th from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. Absentee ballots are in for the November 6th election. Persons who are not registered to vote are encouraged to do so before the November 6th election. Property tax bills will be mailed on November 9, and are due on December 10th. The Skate Park at O'Gara Drive will close for the season at 5:30 p.m. on Sunday, November 4th.

Beginning today, November 1st, the Police Department is holding their annual Food Drive through the holidays. Feel free to help out those less fortunate this holiday season and donate non-perishable goods in our lobby drop-boxes located at the Police Department.

Comments from the Press and Public

None.

Recognitions, Resignations and Retirements

None.

There being no objection, the agenda was amended to take up Old Business.

Old Business

1. Appointment of Library Trustee [Tabled October 25, 2012]

Submitted by Town Council Chairman Tom Mahon and Vice Chair Finlay Rothhaus

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The Town Council to appoint the recommended Library Trustee to fill Martha Wagner's term until the April 2013 election, pursuant to Charter Article 6-2 and RSA 202-A:10.

Councilor Koenig stated he and Councilor Flood along with two of the Library Trustees; Patrick McGrath and Wendy Thomas, interviewed two applicants for the position. Both were extremely qualified. The decision of the interview committee was to nominate Mr. Richard Barnes to fill the remainder of Martha Wagner's term. He noted the decision was a difficult one, and the committee extends regrets to the second applicant, Ms. Jennifer Jobin, as she too was believed to be an excellent candidate. He remarked Mr. Barnes has demonstrated his desire to serve for quite some time, and encouraged Ms. Jobin to continue in her pursuit of community service. The Board of Library Trustees concurred with the nomination of Richard Barnes as the candidate to the Town Council.

MOTION made by Councilor Koenig and seconded by Councilor Harrington to appoint Richard Barnes to the Library Board of Trustees to fill Martha Wagner's term until the April 2013 election. MOTION CARRIED 6/0/0

Oath of Office administered by Chairman Mahon.

Appointments

1. Annual Review with the Town Center Committee

Submitted by Town Center Committee Chairman Peter Flood

Per Town of Merrimack Charter Section 6-6, at least annually, there should be an annual review with the Town Center Committee. This agenda item is to highlight the committee's significant actions, current projects, anticipated actions, and to raise any concerns the Council should know or could act on.

Written remarks provided to the Council, in advance of the meeting, by Mr. Peter Flood, Chairman, Town Center Committee are attached hereto and made a part hereof.

Mr. Flood remarked the Committee has worked hard throughout the year concentrating on two of their action items. The first being the Safe Routes to School program. A subcommittee was formed; headed by Tracy Bull and inclusive of representatives from the school district. Parental involvement, through surveys, has also been sought. The effort is ongoing. The intent of the program is to create a section of sidewalk from Baboosic Lake Road up O'Gara Drive to the existing sidewalk at the first parking lot (approx. ¼ mile). Grant funding is being sought from the New Hampshire Department of Transportation's (DOT) Safe Routes to School program.

The second project on which focus has been placed is the creation of an iconic trail route that will follow the Souhegan River from the High School to the Fire Station and proceed under the Chamberlain Bridge on D.W. Highway along the sluiceway into Watson Park.

Mr. Flood noted several issues addressed in the creation of this trail:

- A Deed was recently received transferring ownership of the area known as the Sluiceway, from Pennichuck Corporation to the Town of Merrimack.
- With the assistance of the Conservation Commission, the Committee is moving forward on the purchase of a parcel of land located along the Souhegan, which is necessary to allow for a continuous trail. It is hoped the Purchase & Sales Agreement can be delivered to the Conservation

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Commission for their meeting on November 5, 2012; thereby allowing it to be presented to the Town Council at their November 15, 2012 meeting.

- Another aspect of connectivity is the creation of a bog walk over the marsh in back of the Fire Station, which will include a bridge. The bridge will require review by the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services and the Souhegan River Local Advisory Board.
- A portion of a loading dock hovers over the end of the trail in Watson Park, and has been determined unsafe. The Town Council has approved its removal, and work is expected to commence shortly.
- A permanent easement will need to be granted by the School District for the trail along the Souhegan over its land.

Mr. Flood noted, as part of this project, an application was submitted to the National Park Service Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program. Earlier in the day notice was received that the application has been accepted/approved. Ms. Lelia Mellen, National Park Service, will be in attendance at the Committee's December 17th meeting to provide a rundown of the types of assistance that will be provided. When asked if there are associated costs, Mr. Flood stated he does not believe that to be the case, and, in fact, believes assistance provided may be to identify/seek funding sources.

Chairman Mahon commented the trail will contribute a great deal to the livability of the community and the ease of traversing from one end of Town to the other. He thanked the Committee for its work. Councilor Flood remarked the trail has been desired for years, and she is pleased with the Committee's success. Councilor Koenig requested additional information on the Safe Routes to School Program and its connection to the Town Center Committee.

Mr. Flood responded a year was spent on the iTRaC Committee, with the help of the Nashua Regional Planning Commission (NRPC), to determine what had to be done, e.g., what pieces had to be chosen and put together to create a contiguous pedestrian walkway system around the greater Town Center. The Committee put together a Master Plan that contained approximately 7 different action items, one of which is participation in the DOT's Safe Routes to School Program. That program provides funding for projects that make it more feasible for students to walk to school. He noted the iTRaC Committee was an advisory committee and the Town Center Committee was charged with carrying out the action items identified within the Master Plan. In doing so, the Committee applied for participation in the DOT's Safe Routes to School Program. That effort required a great deal of coordination with the School Department and was assisted by the NRPC.

Councilor Dwyer thanked the Committee for the work they have done with regard to the Town Center, and noted the amount of work required in acquiring the Deed for the Sluiceway. He stated his appreciation of the cross partnership with the Souhegan River Local Advisory Board in regard to the bog walk. He commented it is indicative of how much the Town Center has gone from a blip on the outer banks of the radar to being something that is a focal point of the community.

Councilor Harrington stated some of the pieces envisioned for the future are coming together. She is excited to see things coming to fruition. She thanked the Committee for their work. Councilor Dwyer spoke of the work of the Committee members for the past year, and expressed his gratitude. When asked if all positions on the Committee are filled, Mr. Flood stated his belief that is the case. He spoke of the skill set and level of work put forth by existing members.

Public Hearing

None.

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Legislative Updates from State Representatives

None.

Town Manager's Report

When asked if power has been restored to Town residents, Town Manager Cabanel stated her belief it has. Chairman Mahon suggested there could remain a few isolated instances of power loss.

Director Micali informed the Council he met earlier in the day with representatives from FEMA and went through the initial application process. He is unsure of whether or not the Town will receive federal reimbursement for expenses associated with the disaster as the county has to be viewed as a whole. Merrimack is one of the largest in population and monetary value. From what he viewed on the report, Nashua, one of the bigger cities in the area, did not have much more damage in terms of estimated dollars than Merrimack. Merrimack's estimate was in the area of \$50,000 and Nashua's \$60,000 - \$65,000. He noted Manchester and a few other communities within Hillsborough County experienced severe damage. Reimbursement is being pursued; however, he is uncertain what the result will be.

Consent Agenda

None.

New Business

1. New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services Mitigation Agreement Form

Submitted by Public Works Deputy Director/Town Engineer Kyle Fox

The Town Council to review the proposal to repair the Red Maple Swamp Trail as mitigation for the Manchester Street Bridge Project.

Public Works Deputy Director/Town Engineer Kyle Fox stated the route of the issue to be the bridge replacement project on Manchester Street, which connects Merrimack and Nashua over the Pennichuck reservoir. The project has been in design for quite a number of years and progress is being made. At this stage, preliminary design work has been completed and accepted by the DOT. The next phase of the project is the Dredge & Fill Permit. The project itself has approximately 22,000 sq. ft. of wetland impacts. When the 10,000 sq. ft. threshold is crossed, the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) requires mitigation of the wetlands.

Mitigation can be in two forms; a monetary contribution to the Aquatic Resource Management (ARM) Fund or through a mitigation project. Mitigation projects have to fall under certain categories; protection of an existing resource, restoration of an existing resource, or creation of a new resource. In February of this year, he met with the Conservation Commission. The Commission chose to pursue a mitigation project and forwarded a few proposed projects to NHDES. The Mitigation Coordinator for NHDES, Lori Sommer, stated a preference for the Red Maple Trail project.

This spring a proposal was sent to Ms. Sommer, and she has verbally approved the project. On October 15, 2012 Director Kyle provided an update to the Conservation Commission. The Commission voted 7/0 to approve funding the project through the Conservation Fund.

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In order for the Dredge & Fill Permit to be submitted, both Merrimack and Nashua have to consent to the mitigation. The Council was provided with a consent form and asked to approve it. The agreement commits the Town to completing the mitigation project, and allows for the bridge project to continue in advance of completion of the mitigation project.

When asked, Public Works Deputy Director/Town Engineer Kyle Fox explained the Red Maple Swamp Trail is an existing (logger) trail, which, during wet times, experiences erosion (mud ends up in swamp). The intent of the project is to reconstruct the trail, e.g., placement of culverts, re-grading/reshaping, inclusion of trail building techniques, etc. to facilitate the trail being dry throughout the seasons and eliminating erosion. He further explained Merrimack's share of the calculated contribution into the ARM Fund would have been approximately \$53,000. The project cost is estimated to be at \$26,000 (2010 estimate). He noted the Conservation Commission is also giving consideration to the realignment of the entrance to the trail from Conservation Drive, which is estimated to have an approximate cost of \$20,000.

Councilor Dwyer questioned why the bridge project impacts wetlands in such a way that mitigation is required. Mr. Fox responded one of the aspects they encountered in the preliminary design process for the bridge is the existing bridge (with its granite abutments) was determined to be historically significant by the New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources (NHDHR). Any time you want to replace a historically significant bridge there is mitigation that has to occur. The way the historical resource issue was mitigated was by raising the profile of the bridge. By raising the profile the toe of slope is put further out into the river, which increased wetland impacts.

Councilor Boyd remarked the \$55,000 contribution into the ARM Fund would have provided no benefit to the Town. He requested clarification the amount of contribution did not have to be matched through mitigation and the proposed mitigation is considered comparable. Mr. Fox stated that to be accurate. He added a financial contribution would be a calculated number based on the town, square footage involved, and type of wetland; whereas a mitigation project is based on a square footage comparison.

Councilor Boyd questioned whether the mitigation project would include replacement of culverts and elimination of muddy areas. Director Kyle stated some would be upsized and the existing log type bridge may call for a larger bridge or culvert. These are some of the design aspects that will have to be considered for the project.

Councilor Koenig questioned whether the mitigation would alleviate all mitigation requirements for the bridge project or if Nashua is required to provide mitigation as well. Director Kyle responded Nashua also has a requirement for mitigation, and has made the decision to make a contribution into the ARM Fund. Councilor Flood noted the cost of the mitigation project is less than what would have been required for a contribution to the ARM Fund. She commented she read in the notes provided the difference would be put aside for a future project. Director Kyle explained if the decision had been made to make a monetary contribution the cost would have been \$53,000. Because the decision was made for a mitigation project, the cost of that project will satisfy the requirements.

Councilor Dwyer questioned whether Merrimack and Nashua share ownership of the bridge, and was informed they do. When asked what the percentage of ownership is, Director Kyle stated it to be 75/25. The bridge project is being funded through the State Bridge Aid Replacement Program (funded by State DOT at 80% and 20% from the municipalities; Merrimack 5%/Nashua 15%).

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Councilor Harrington stated her pleasure with the direction being taken to address the requirement for mitigation.

Chairman Mahon provided the consent form to the Council for review.

MOTION made by Councilor Koenig and seconded by Councilor Boyd that the Town Council approve then proposal to repair the Red Maple Swamp Trail as mitigation for the Manchester Street Bridge Project and authorize the Town Manager to sign any and all documents required. MOTION CARRIED 6/0/0

2. Administration and Appointment Policy for Boards, Committees and Commissions

Submitted by Councilor William W. Boyd, III and Debra Huffman

The Town Council to consider the recommended changes to the Town of Merrimack's Appointment Policy for Boards, Committees and Commissions.

Councilor Boyd remarked several months ago he was approached by Ms. Debra Huffman regarding the Administration and Appointment Policy and its non-descriptive nature with regard to providing an explanation of the process to be undertaken by an individual interested in becoming a sitting member of a board, committee or commission. After reviewing the current policy, proposed language, and other policies within the State, he prepared an amended document and requested the Town Manager forward it along to counsel for a legal opinion. After going through a few iterations, together they have drafted language, which is believed to address the concern. The Council was provided with a marked up version of the current policy inclusive of recommended amendments. Councilor Boyd stated his hope the draft document would initiate further discussion and/or amendments towards the creation of a policy that will provide transparency for the process.

Ms. Debra Huffman thanked Councilor Boyd for his assistance. She noted, at a previous meeting, Councilor Harrington had questioned whether all appropriate policies and procedures had been followed during the appointment process, and had been informed they were. The raising of that question is what prompted Ms. Huffman to question what those policies and procedures are. After researching the policy, she discovered there simply is not enough information to allow interested parties to understand the necessary procedures. She remarked she agrees with Councilor Boyd that additional amendments are likely necessary. She remarked she is pleased with the inclusion of selection criteria. Another inclusion she is pleased with is Section IV E, which speaks to the Council's obligation to advise members of a committee in situation such as a grievance concerning the conduct or decisions of a committee.

She noted the current policy includes language regarding an appointment sub-committee. The proposed version speaks to the Council as a whole reviewing each applicant in a public meeting. She is of the opinion the process of a sub-committee is an efficient manner in which to interview applicants. She added the proposed version eliminates language such as "Applicants who are not recommended for appointment shall receive a letter thanking them for applying....." She would like to see written communication with the applicants remain within the policy.

Councilor Boyd stated he would like to see a requirement to provide candidates who were unsuccessful with an explanation of criteria used in the decision making process. Councilor Dwyer questioned how specific the policy language needs to be with regard to inclusion of a requirement to inform an unsuccessful candidate of the reasoning behind the decision. Councilor Boyd suggested policy

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language could simply note the existence of the form letter used by the sub-committee when making a recommendation.

Councilor Harrington stated her belief it would be cumbersome for the entire Council to partake in the deliberation; however, questioned how that could be weighed against a sub-committee making a recommendation and ensuring sufficient information is provided to the Council. She was unsure whether a detailed accounting of the information to be provided should be included within the policy itself.

Chairman Mahon remarked the current policy requires the Chairman to be involved in almost all interviews. As a result, he is keenly aware of the time commitment involved. He believes that level of time commitment is more than should be required of all members of the Council. He suggested the size of the sub-committee could be adjusted to allow the workload to be more widely spread. He further suggested the process could be amended whereby information is presented and questions posed at a first reading of the nomination and action taken at a second reading. He remarked the difficulty that poses is in the amount of additional time required to complete the process, and the increased burden on the committee, staff, etc.

Councilor Koenig spoke of an instance where the Council was provided nomination paperwork the evening of the meeting, which did not provide ample time for review. When provided information days in advance, the opportunity exists to gain additional insight if desired. He suggested language could be included which states a requirement for several days' advance notification of the committee's recommendation. He noted the policy states the Chairman can appoint someone to the nomination committee and, therefore, does not have to take on that responsibility solely. He agreed trying to get all of the nominations in June or July for all of the different boards, committees, and commissions is burdensome and should be work shared by the Council as much as possible.

Councilor Boyd suggested, when applicants are interviewed for nomination to a particular board, committee, or commission, the Council representative to that board, committee, or commission should be tasked with chairing the meeting and soliciting the participation of two additional Councilors. Councilor Flood remarked, in instances where several applicants are being considered for a single position, she would like advance notice provided as those interviews, in particular, she would like to be in attendance for. Chairman Mahon noted meetings of the sub-committee are posted, as required. He commented there have been instances where meetings of the sub-committee have been conducted a day or two prior to a meeting of the Council, because of time constraints and the need of some boards, committees, or commissions to be properly organized.

Councilor Koenig suggested, while the current policy may be brief, it is fairly clear and easily understood. Legalese such as "abrogate the prerogative of the Town Council" could be rephrased and made clearer. Councilor Flood thanked Ms. Huffman for stepping forward to be of assistance.

Councilor Koenig spoke of Section IV – Administration of Committees, which is new to the policy, and questioned the will of the Council with regard to its inclusion. He stated his belief the Council should not encourage boards, committees, or commissions to create Bylaws unless important and practical for a particular one. He commented on the casual nature of most, which is inviting to volunteers. He also spoke of the time commitment involved in the creation of Bylaws. Councilor Boyd noted most of the existing boards, committees, and commissions already have Bylaws in place. One he is aware of that does not, and has expressed an interest, is the Information Technology Committee. He noted the last sentence of paragraph B states: "It is encouraged that a committee

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enable a set of By-Laws by which the committee can govern itself.” Councilor Koenig stated his appreciation of the distinction provided with the use of the word “encouraged”.

Councilor Harrington commented there has to be some sort of decision by each as to how to go about making decisions and the criteria under which they function just as there needs to be language that speaks to the Council being apprised of and providing guidance with regard to any issues that arise.

Councilor Boyd was asked to incorporate recommended changes and bring forth an amended version for consideration.

3. Social Media Policy

Submitted by Councilor William W. Boyd, III

To review and consider adopting a Social Media Policy to establish guidelines for the development and use of social media sites by the Town of Merrimack.

Councilor Boyd spoke of the tremendous growth the Town has experienced and the work being performed, from an economic standpoint, to promote the Town of Merrimack. He touched upon the types of social media used by staff in the promotion of the Town, e.g., the town’s website, Twitter, Facebook, etc. He stated his desire for the creation of a social media policy that would protect the Town by providing guidance as to the types of information being disbursed in this manner, how the information is managed, etc.

He questioned the will of the Council with regard to the creation of a policy, and provided a working document that could be used to further discussion. In preparing the document he researched similar policies in place in Fullerton, CA, Portsmouth, NH, Keene, NH, and examples provided by the Local Government Center (LGC). He stated the desire to gain feedback, through the Town Manager, from staff members who would utilize such a policy. He suggested that type of collaboration could result in a policy that, although perhaps broad in scope, would address concerns staff may have, provide a protection to the Town in instances of liability, etc. and would provide the foundation to staff by which they could use the mediums to promote the brand the community has worked hard at; making Merrimack the best community it can be.

Chairman Mahon suggested the document could be referred to the Town Manager along with a request that staff review the document and provide feedback. He stated his concern would be with an unauthorized user gaining access to one of those sites and behaving in a manner detrimental to the community or a member of the community. He remarked the more accessible it is, the more likely problematic issues could arise. He stated a desire to ensure the policy clearly identifies the responsibilities associated with use of this type of media to communicate with the community.

Councilor Flood stated her hope anything placed on such media sources would be done in an official capacity, e.g., announcements, etc., and that the need for oversight would not exist. Town Manager Cabanel stated her belief it is helpful to have guidelines and remarked the medium is wide open for interpretation. She provided a few examples of instances where information could be posted to social media sites that would not be in the best interest of the Town or fit within the framework of Town business. She stated she would not be opposed to the existence of a policy whereby employees would acknowledge their awareness of guidelines.

Councilor Harrington suggested it could be an extension of the Internet policy. Councilor Koenig stated a concern the Council would attempt to legislate too much into the policy. He suggested the

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policy be crafted to be as broad/minimal as possible to avoid being specific about particular areas of concern and by extension non-specific about other areas. Councilor Dwyer agreed with the desire to keep a policy broad. He also agreed with the suggested of incorporating social media into the Internet policy.

The Town Manager was asked to gain feedback from staff, and report back to the Council with suggestions/recommendations.

Minutes

Approve the minutes from the following Town Council meetings:

June 15, 2012 - Long Range Planning Session Summary Report

MOTION made by Councilor Harrington and seconded by Councilor Boyd to accept the Summary Report of the June 15, 2012 Long Range Planning Session as provided by the consultant.

ON THE QUESTION

Councilor Dwyer suggested the Council consider enacting a procedure whereby a review of the planning session report is conducted six months after the retreat to ascertain whether or not actions decided upon have taken place. Chairman Mahon suggested a review be conducted at the December 20, 2012 meeting. **MOTION CARRIED 7/0/0**

October 11, 2012

MOTION made by Councilor Boyd and seconded by Councilor Dwyer to approve the minutes of the October 11, 2012 Town Council Meeting as presented.

The following amendments were offered:

Page 17, Line 37; delete the sentence that reads "Councilor Koenig stated it is not an illegal act."

Page 23, Line 25; replace the word "assume" with the words "as soon"

MOTION CARRIED 6/0/1

Councilor Flood Abstained

Comments from the Press

None.

Comments from the Public

None.

Comments from the Council

Councilor Boyd noted Brandon Snell's Annual Blood Drive will be conducted on Monday, November 12, 2012 at the St. James Methodist Church from 2:00 – 7:00 p.m. He informed the viewing public the Christmas tree lighting will take place on Sunday, December 2, 2012.

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Councilor Harrington reminded citizens of the single polling place; Merrimack High School gymnasium. She remarked thoughts and prayers go out to the residents of New Jersey and New York. Councilor Koenig thanked staff for their efforts during and in the aftermath of the recent storm.

Chairman Mahon also expressed his gratitude for briefings provided and the roundtable discussion department heads conducted. He spoke of the professionalism with which the departments addressed the situation and the coordination that occurred with outside agencies. Councilor Koenig noted the Emergency Operations Center put a great deal of effort into the dissemination of information.

Chairman Mahon remarked, in his capacity as Chairman of the New Hampshire Rail Trail Authority Board of Directors, he was a guest of the New England Rail Passenger Association in the Downeaster Inaugural Run to Brunswick, ME from Boston. He noted Brunswick has contributed \$10 million in private investment into the area around their train station. The station was set up as sort of an arcade with the platform and stores on the ground floor and offices above. He spoke of the tremendous economic boost the area will receive.

Councilor Dwyer commented as long as private funding is involved he is in favor of rail to Concord. Chairman Mahon remarked the Rail Authority understands the necessity of public/private partnerships. Councilor Dwyer added, if state or federal funds are to be utilized ticket prices should reflect true operating costs.

MOTION made by Councilor Koenig and seconded by Councilor Dwyer to adjourn the meeting.
MOTION CARRIED 7/0/0

The November 1, 2012 meeting of the Town Council was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Submitted by Dawn MacMillan

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TOWN CENTER COMMITTEE
2012 ANNUAL REVIEW

The Town Center Committee was charged in November, 2009 to carry out the Pedestrian and Trail Master Plan that was the purpose of the iTRaC Committee. The Town Center Committee was put together during the summer of 2011 and met for the first time in September.

The first goal was to look at the possibility of financial help from NHDOT through their program called "Safe Routes to School" by getting briefed by Camille Paffison and Matt Waitkins of NRPC. A subcommittee was formed to pursue this and involved the school district with appropriate representatives. Tracy Bull agreed to lead the grant effort, and she presented the details to the Town Council on Nov. 17, 2011 and to the School Board on Jan. 20, 2012. She finalized plans for a parent and student survey.

Meanwhile, member Pat McGrath was added to the Town Center Committee from the Library Board of Trustees and another, Andy Powell, from the public. In October, 2011, the Committee walked the trail route that will follow the Souhegan from the High School to the Fire Station and proceed under the Chamberlain Bridge on D.W. Highway along the sluiceway into Watson Park. Several problems along this route were noted and study of the ownership of the sluiceway was found necessary. Eileen Cabanel and Tim Thompson were supportive of this effort. Nelson Disco has patiently worked at obtaining permission to involve Matt Upton in working with Pennichuck to gain ownership of the sluiceway; a deed was received recently. A remaining piece of a loading dock hovering over the end of the trail in Watson Park was determined to be unsafe. The Town Council approved the removal of it, and the work is expected to be done soon. A permanent easement will need to be granted by the School District for the trail along the Souhegan over its land.

The Committee is now preparing a presentation of the plan for the Trail along the Souhegan to the School Board as well as an update of the "Safe Routes to School" program. This week, 5 members, Peter, Nelson Disco, Pat McGrath, Steve Keach and Mary Hendricks, examined the sluiceway and passage under the bridge plus the loading dock. The consensus is that it is doable and should not be that expensive to effectuate safe passage.

In December, an easement or ownership of a parcel of land on the Souhegan was discussed, and beginning steps were taken to purchase it. At this time, a draft purchase and sales agreement has been drafted by the town attorney to use Conservation Commission funds for the town to take ownership of this critical property for the trail to be continuous. By January, 2012, Deb Huffman took the lead to study building a "Bog Walk" over the marsh in back of the Fire Station. The project will include a bridge and will need review by the DES and by the Souhegan River Local Advisory Board. Deb and Peter Flood met with Kyle Fox at the site. At this time, the Conservation Commission's Matt Caron is optimistic about the Bog Walk and bridge being affordable and buildable.

Through Andy Powell the Committee reached out to the National Park Service for Administrative assistance. Lelia Mellon came to brief the members on the Rivers and Trails Program. Andy drafted a National Parks Grant proposal to take part in this program. He obtained letters of support from the School District, the Souhegan River Local Advisory Board, the Town Council, the NRPC which also attached a map. At this time, the Committee is waiting for approval, hopefully by the end of this month.

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In April, Pat McGrath of the Rotary Club of Merrimack obtained a Rotary District grant for \$1000 for Trail Signs that will be in Twin Bridges Park. Originally intended for the Souhegan River Trail, the money had to be spent before a deadline so we applied it to Twin Bridges.

In August, the Town Council approved the Town Center Committee's taking over any responsibilities of the Merrill's Marauders Bridge Trail Committee and terminated the Bridge Committee. Pat McGrath is getting information on Merrill from the NHDOT.

In summation:

Our decision to concentrate our efforts on two action items of the Master Plan — the trail to connect the Wildcat Falls area all the way along the Souhegan and into Watson Park, and the "Safe Routes to School" effort to help fund a meaningful sidewalk from Baboosic Lake Road up O'Gara Drive to the existing sidewalk seems to be bearing fruit.

Every member of the Committee is energized by what we now see as a successful outcome and will keep us working toward that success.

Members include: Peter Flood, Chairman, Nelson Disco, Vice Chairman/Planning Board Rep., Debra Huffman, Secretary, Bill Wilkes, Andy Powell, Tracy Bull, SAU Rep., Mary Hendricks, Chamber Rep., Pat McGrath, Library Trustees Rep., and Dan Dwyer, Town Council Rep.