

Minutes of the meeting of the Springfield Trails, Greenways, Byways and Rural Economy Advisory Committee, January 23, 2018

Present were George McNaughton (presiding), Chuck Gregory, Randy Gray, Bettina McCrady, Hallie Whitcomb, and Walter Wallace (a member of the public)

Old business:

Secretary's Report: The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as submitted (Gregory/Gray).

Grasslands report: Hallie Whitcomb reported that the main issue— worry that people weren't going to have sufficient fields for raising beef— wasn't going to be a problem. George McNaughton said the slaughterhouse reported they don't have a big enough supply locally because farmers can make more money growing hay for the equestrian market. Walter Wallace asked if the shortage of grasslands a local or a statewide issue. George said it is both, because people are letting pasturelands go fallow and that at some point we might not have acreage available for pasturage. Hallie pointed out the expense of keeping pasturage mowed and its unsuitability when mowed for raising beef. She believed the demand for pastures ought to come from people who intend to raise beef cattle. George mentioned experiences with local raisers of cattle, horses and sheep. He said issues would involve mowing, fencing and responsibility for corralling loose animals. Walter Wallace said it appears as though pastureland south of White River Junction has been disappearing for thirty years. George said that pasturelands often open up a view, increasing the land values. Chuck Gregory asked if we could get some data on the economics of cattle raising. George suggested talking to the slaughterhouse people. Hallie suggested Steve Gintoff. George said he will contact UVM Extension Services if someone else will talk to Gintoff and the slaughterhouse people.

Toonerville Mineral Street Extension: George said the town manager is very interested in the 1996 trail study that was written up. The trail would link the Toonerville trail to Mineral Street, Pearl Street and the plaza. Chuck Gregory said that he got the proposal for a Mineral Street mini-park on the Union/Park neighborhood association meeting for Thursday, January 31. Randy Gray produced the map of the 1996 study, and Walter Wallace explained its relation to the trolley line. There was discussion of the geographical difficulties Mineral Street presents for having a pedestrian/biker pathway, including the possibility of a bridge to bypass a difficult stretch. George asked if somebody would write up a mini-report for the town manager. Moved to present a report to the selectboard and the planning commission about the prospects for a bike/pedestrian trail and pocket park on Mineral Street. (Gregory/McCrady). Passed. Chuck and George volunteered. Randy will provide a sketch of the area for the report. The report will be reviewed at the February meeting.

Zoning/By-laws amendments: Walter Wallace said he will send the Regulations documents in Word format to all members. George said the critical sections for the committee's work will be about the buffer zones.

New business:

Freedom Park-South Street trail and North School trail—Randy pointed out the two trails' location for the committee.

Urban Forest Strategic Management Plan— Bettina reported that she finds the plan to be quite good. George produced a 35-page report that he obtained from Kelly Stettner. It was determined that Bettina's report was the action plan part of the report he had, and that at present no actions will be taken for lack of money. Bettina advocated that we inform the town of our support for implementation of the Urban Forest Action Plan. So moved (Whitcomb/Gray). Passed.

Master Trail Map progress—Randy Gray said he has the materials for a ledger-sized color print of a master map. Bettina McCrady said she can print it for the committee. He provided a copy of the master map for review. George asked Randy to check on any 2013 update to the north extension of the Toonerville Trail. Randy asked if anybody knew if the sidewalk was going to be replaced in the Elm Hill School area. Bettina McCrady described maintenance problems with various of Springfield's parks and the Toonerville trail.

Other:

1. George reported the Climate Town and Economy project might select Springfield for funding a project. If so, we and the Energy Committee would be involved in working for it. Hallie mentioned the Energy Committee is promoting free energy audits for homes, and there will be a public informational meeting about it Thursday at the Congregational Church at 7:00 PM this week.
2. George mentioned the River Basin Plan that has been promulgated by the state. It will have some impact on Springfield, such as its attention to Comtu Falls as "an outstanding water resource," which might affect development planning; the Weathersfield Reservoir as not being a suitable water source; and the labeling of the lower stretch of the Black River as threatened by *e. coli* from the sewage plant and warm temperatures being inimical to the trout population. He encouraged all to comment on the plan. George asked if we want to have the pedestrian/bike path along the river to be included as a town resource in the Report. So moved. (Gregory/McCrady). Passed.

Randy reported he attended the Muckross meeting. The parking lot will be right on Paddock Road. The next meeting will be in three months. There will be discussion at that meeting about creating educational programs for the school and the engineering required for extending trails from Muckross. Randy asked if we wanted to be involved. He is not sure how communication will be handled with the private landowners whose property the trail(s) might cross. Bettina said she can ask Christian Craig if he thinks we should be involved. George mentioned we as a group or representatives of it are barred from contacting them. George suggested we approach the select board about the snowmobile trail gap represented in the area of Muckross.

Next meeting's agenda items: Walter Wallace asked that copies of our Basin request be forwarded to the Planning Commission.

The Mineral Street report to the select board and the Planning Commission is to be discussed.

The meeting adjourned at 9:19.

Respectfully submitted,

chuck gregory, secretary