

Minutes - Thompson Trails Committee

Monday, December 4, 2023 7:00 p.m.

Location: Merrill Seney Meeting Room – Thompson Town Hall.

PLEASE NOTE: There was an error with the zoom link, so no online meeting room was opened and no meeting recording is available

Members Attending: B. Loffredo – Acting Chair, J. Kochinskas, L. Langlois, C. Obert, P. Provost

Others Attending: J. Blanchette – J&D Engineering, L. Graf – TLGV, T. Penn-Gesek – Director of Planning & Development

7:00 Choose a moderator – L. Langlois volunteers to moderate

Corrections to & approval of past minutes of October 2 2023 – B. Loffredo moves/ P. Provost 2nds approval of the minutes as presented. All in favor.

Correspondence – No relevant correspondence

2024 Meeting dates submitted:

February 5, April 1, June 3, August 5, October 7, December 2

Finances – Update will be given under the agenda item for the Turkey Trot

7:10 Citizen's Comments - none

7:20 Trail Updates: ALL

Air Line State Park Trail

Great East Thompson Train Wreck park:

J. Blanchette shows the Committee the updated draft of the construction documents for the work to be done under the 2nd CTDEEP Recreational Trails Grant. She clarifies for the members that J&D is creating the professional contracts & bid specs, along with the defined scope of work for the project. There are 2 main components to the contract, the turntable interpretive site and the parking area & on-street traffic calming. The bid documents will instruct bidders to show each of these 2 components separately in their proposals. This will give the Town the option of awarding the contract to 2 different vendors, if that is the most cost-effective strategy.

J. Blanchette shows the committee the existing drafts of the detail sheets for the two focus areas. In the parking area, there is discussion of the materials to be used for the re-routed section of the trail and the guiderails separating the trail from the new parking lot. The consensus is for gravel with compacted stone dust on the trail, with pressure-treated wood guiderails. Landscaping for the area is also discussed. Any plantings must be low maintenance, e.g. low-mow grass species or no-mow native ground covers (low-bush blueberry and wintergreen are mentioned). Sight-lines to the street are also of concern, so any plantings must also be low-profile. There is also discussion about winter plowing. It is believed that the Town currently plows part of the existing dirt lot, as a school bus turnaround. If so, then it would be logical that part of the lot will also be plowed after it is reconstructed. The bike rack & repair station will be

purchased by the town and provided to the contractor to install. The existing barrier gate will have to move further west on the trail. J. Blanchette asks the committee how to instruct the contractor to stagger construction to leave some parking access while work is ongoing. The consensus is to ask for 10 spaces to be left open during all phases of construction, with the understanding that there may be a few days when laying the asphalt prevents parking entirely. The goal is to get the documents completed and out to bid by the end of January, but that will depend on CTDEEP giving their approval of the plans.

The committee looks at the detail sheet for the turntable site, which is less defined than the parking area thus far. J. Blanchette asks the members what they envision inside the turntable circle. This leads to discussion of the partially exposed foundation of the engine house, which the Historical Society would also like dug out for public viewing. The consensus is for crushed stone, to sufficient depth to discourage weeds from filling in. The site will require substantial clearing & stump removal, to enable the work. As with the parking area, questions are raised regarding landscaping after construction. It is suggested that any plantings associated with the parking area could be repeated in the turntable area. Species must be native and low-maintenance. It is still anticipated that the turntable circle will require annual leaf-blowing. **P. Provost** suggests that he should meet with J. Blanchette on-site to clarify the Historical Society & Trails Committee priorities in the area.

Grants & turntable site acquisition status

T. Penn clarifies that the first grant (design, legal, acquisition) is actively being drawn down. The PZC and BoS each approved the acquisition of the ½ acre parcel from the Butlers. It is expected that the Selectmen will move that to Town Meeting for final approval at their meeting on 5 Dec. That would likely put the Town Meeting to approve the transaction on Monday 18 December. The members are asked to attend and vote on the approval. The 2nd grant (construction) was not for the full amount requested, so the picnic pavilion and welcome kiosk area will likely be out of reach. If funds remain after the construction of the turntable & parking area, then the possibility of constructing one or both of those structures will be explored.

Bike Repair Station

Both Trails and EDC have money set aside to order the equipment. Each of them has committed nearly the full cost of the product plus shipping. **J. Kochinskias** asks if it makes sense to order two, and install a second station at the Mechanicsville trailhead, as had been previously discussed. **T. Penn** commits to bringing a cost estimate for 2 units to the February meeting for consideration. **J. Blanchette** recommends a post-style installation, rather than a poured concrete pad, as more practical for the site. She will include the installation specs in the bid documents.

Maintenance/work days – none currently scheduled.

7:40 Events

Holiday Tree donation – **L. Langlois** has the tree and asks for assistance setting it up at the library on Thursday 7 Dec between 4-8 p.m. **J. Kochinskias** provides some ornaments for the tree.

2023 Turkey Trot report

B. Loffredo gives the report. The event raised \$2k more in sponsorships over the previous year. The total income from the program is just shy of \$16k, with roughly \$5200 going to each of the three partner

organizations. There are still invoices outstanding from WINY, Earthworks and the awards vendor. The 2024 date is 10 November. B. Loffredo states that his goal is to bring in \$2k over this year's total, in sponsorships, and to have 200 runners.

Cemetery Walk report – After a challenging start the event went well. The cemetery caretaker initially attempted to stop the event, but it did proceed once he spoke to **J. Iamartino**. It is suggested that an additional reminder to the caretaker a week ahead of the event would probably be wise. It is also suggested that it be broken into 2 sessions, one before and one after dark, since so many people attended and there were parking challenges.

8:00 Social Media/PR/Outreach/Maps/Brochures & Flyers – no substantive updates

8:10 Reports from neighboring towns

L. Graf reports that TLGV hosted a breakfast at the Publick House, where they discussed their ongoing search for a new headquarters. They want to stay somewhere in the northeast corner (Pomfret/Putnam/Brooklyn), where the dark night skies would be visible. **T. Penn** mentions that there may be a building in Thompson that would suit their needs, which is currently under renovation. She will make the connection between the owner and TLGV.

8:15 CT Trail Census, counter calibration – no updates

8:20 Equipment/tool status/maintenance

J. Kochinskas mentions that he needs to move the trailer for winter storage.

8:30 New Agenda items for future meetings: term limits

C. Obert wants to make an official request to DPW for application of stone dust on the Air Line Trail from Lowell Davis to Sand Dam

Next business meeting date: February 5, 2023

Adjourn – 8:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Tyra Penn-Gesek, Director of Planning & Development