

Town of Middleton, Massachusetts
Rail to Trail Committee

Virtual Meeting Minutes
March 17, 2021
7:30 PM

Attendees – Richard Gilman, John LeBlanc, Marty Emmick, Charlie Costigan, Katrina O’Leary, Kerri Staffier, Sherri Armitage, Rick Kassiotis

Charlie, nominated by John and seconded by Marty, was elected Chairperson by everyone present.

Charlie called the first meeting of the Middleton Rail Trail Committee (MRTAC) to order at 7:00.

Charlie discussed the role and function of MRTAC, a Town Committee, and how it differs from the Middleton Rail Trail Alliance (MIRTA), a private group.

As a Town Committee MRTAC has space on the Town website and input into how funds allocated by the Town for the Rail Trail are used. MITRA has a separate website and raises funds through donations.

Charlie then briefly outlined the Rail Trail project, which is about 4.5 miles in length. The trail runs from the Danvers line across Route 62, behind Howe Manning School and up along Essex Street to the North Andover line. The goal is to complete the trail in 4 phases. Phase 1 which runs from Essex to Central Streets is largely done. Phase 2 runs from Central Street, across Route 62 to Highland Road. Phase 3 runs from Highland to the Danvers line. Phase 4 runs along Essex Street to North Andover.

A grant has been submitted by Katrina and the Town for funding to complete Phase 2. We hope to hear by March 26, 2021. This grant will require matching funding from the Town. Some of the \$49,000 left over from Phase 1, may also be available.

Challenges in completing Phase 2 include the Webb Street crossing, removing the metal electric towers and getting approval from the Conservation Commission. Kristin, the Town Conservation Agent, has helped MITRA file a Notice of Intent for the April 6, 2021 meeting. It was agreed a thank you note should be sent to her by MRTAC.

Katrina also raised the issue of how to proceed if the grant request is denied. Some items in Phase 1, such as painting the streets, ADA warning panels and signs, still need to be installed and/or completed. The DPW may be able to help with some items and outside vendors will be hired for the other work. Charlie mentioned using fill the Town already has could help to reduce costs.

Katrina, Charlie and Marty attended a meeting with the MASS DOT to discuss the Route 62 bridge project. This will hopefully include a pedestrian bridge over the river. The project is not slated to begin until 2024.

There was some discussion about Phase 4. The challenges include -- how to manage the span between Dixie Drive and Old Essex Street where there are no sidewalks; the trail from Old Essex is overgrown in places; several small bridges need to be improved heading towards the North Andover line.

Katrina mentioned an effort to have the Lynnfield Rail Trail meet up with the Peabody and North Reading Rail Trails. And could Middleton connect to that as well. There are currently no sidewalks that run all the way to Russell Street in Peabody and a pedestrian crossing over the river would be needed. Rick suggested we send a letter of support to Lynnfield and Peabody as well as get more information.

There was some discussion about placement for the old rail station. John explained the building needed a lot of work and was not a historic building eligible for grants. But something to keep in mind.

Charlie made a motion to appoint Richard Gilman as Secretary. Marty seconded the motion and everyone voted in favor.

John made a motion to name Marty Emmick as co-chair. Rick seconded the motion and it passed with unanimous approval.

Katrina explained there was no need to have a Treasurer, since the committee only made recommendations to the Town about spending and policy.

After discussion it was agreed MRTAC and MITRA meetings would be separate. MITRA meetings are monthly and MRTC quarterly. The next MRTC meeting would be on June 16, 2021. When MRTC and MITRA meetings fall on the same day the MRTC meeting would be held first at 6:30; followed by the MITRA meeting.

Charlie explained MRTC meeting minutes need to be posted to the Town site when approved. Also, meeting announcements need to be submitted at least two business days before a meeting is held.

Rick made a motion to adjourn, seconded by John and approved by all attendees.