

Minutes
CT Greenways Council
February 14, 2011
Offices of CT Dept of Transportation
Newington, CT

Meeting called to order by Chairman Bill O'Neill at 10:00 AM

Present – Bill O'Neill, Jan Collins, Bob Dickinson, David Gumbart, Joe Hickey, Mark Paquette, Tracy Gionfriddo, Laurie Giannotti (DEP liaison), Tenia Seay (DEP), Katherine Rattan (DOT liaison) and Lois Bruinooge (call-in).

Guests- Tony Estanislau (DOT), Steve Mitchell (ECGA), Sandy Fry (CRCOG), Josh LeCar (Merritt Pkwy Trail Alliance), Ken Shooshin-Stoller (Fed Highway Administration), David Head (DOT), Colleen Kissane (DOT Assistant Planning Director), Bruce Donald (Farmington Valley Trails), and Georgette Yaindl (Bike Walk CT)

Chairman's Report & acceptance of Dec 2010 minutes

No specific Chairman report but Bill would like at the end of the meeting for everyone to offer their suggestions of high priority action items for Greenways for 2011.

Clarification from Sandy regarding proposed bus way between New Britain and Newington: the bus way design includes the trail, and clarification on the Griffin Line, the high voltage lines might be a barrier to a trail and would be expensive to move, they are not being moved at this point.

Mark motioned and Joe 2nd to accept clarified minutes. Passed unanimously.

Correspondence article from the Hartford Courant regarding the Andover bridge was circulated

Connecticut Department of Transportation (ConnDOT) Update

David Head, our host for the day, introduced Katherine Rattan, DOT non-motorized transportation coordinator as the new DOT liaison (replacing David Blazer's Greenway duties) and the go-to DOT person for any bike/ped issues from the Council.

David also announced there will be an Enhancement Workshop on 2/15 with the all the Regions.

The Andover bridge is complete and DOT is working with the contractor on the logistics of the actual installation. Laurie reported there are still some Greenway monies that need to be recontracted but about \$27000 is available along with DOT grant money for the installation.

Regarding the Merritt hiking trail, David said it is difficult to issue trail permits without public outreach. Josh mentioned there is a pending federal grant to fund the outreach process. The consensus is if town by town sections could be built those still objecting might change their minds. There needs to be a sense from DOT that the project can move forward. Colleen mentioned she is watching daily for that National Scenic Byway grant.

Tony reported the Bolton gap between Manchester and Bolton Notch of the ECGreenway, has been discussed at various meetings and hopefully will be resolved soon.

Legislative Report

SB1502 which has a section relating to Greenways asking the Governor to request the Bond Commission to fund a Greenways program through DEP focusing on interstate-intertown regional gap closing projects, needs nudging as it sits on the Governor's desk. We need to find the political person who can make a case to the Governor citing the Return on Investment as an important concept.

The license plate funds are still truncated and need legislative action to initiate the restoration.

Old Business

License plate fund – see above

Recreation Trails Grant Program – Laurie reported there is a legislative event in Washington DC this week to raise awareness of the issue. The feeling is that the smaller RTP program will probably be moved to a general funding pool which will make for more competition for the funds. The 2010 funds have been released and DEP is sending out the contracts.

Merritt Parkway Multi-use Trail – see above

Andover Bridge – see above

Spring Meeting of the East Coast Greenway, April 29th- May 1st.

Steve reported exciting plans are moving forward for the bike ride on Friday, April 29th. There will be 3 different groups of riders on a 10-90 mile ride from Yale University to Simsbury. He is hoping many appointed officials will be involved to see the trail first hand and the connections to the roads and really appreciate the potential for the ECGW through Connecticut and reinforce the mindset of a bicycle friendly community and state. David suggested inviting the DOT Commissioner, etc.

Open Council Seat - The House minority leader needs to be contacted for an appointment for this Seat. No action taken at this time.

New Business

Georgette Yaindl is the Executive Director of Bike Walk Connecticut. She gave a short presentation about her organization whose mission is changing the culture of transportation through education and advocacy to make bicycling and walking safe, feasible, and attractive for a healthier, cleaner Connecticut. Two core program components include:

State Legislative Advocacy: 2011 endorsed agenda includes supporting the Recreational Land Use Liability amendment which would cover municipalities as well as private landowners, support legislation so localities may use red light camera technology in law enforcement, and the "vulnerable users"

legislation which hopes to accomplish at the very least, sending drivers back to “drivers ed” if a vulnerable user is injured by a culpable driver. The other core program of the organization is a bicycle skills training and instruction program statewide targeting particularly youth groups and driver license applicants, etc. Georgette mentioned that May is National Bike Month. She would like to see some “thank you activity” planned for everyday of the month, (thank your local trails coordinator, thank your DOT trails coordinator, etc,etc.) **She challenged the Council to come up with something for Sunday May 1st.** May 20th is bike to work day during bike to work week. Georgette is also going to provide the Council with a bike/ped friendly list of legislators.

Resolution: Bill would like to send a letter to the new Governor and the new DEEP Commissioner in greeting and to mention a few of our Greenway issues. Joe motioned and Mark 2nd that Bill would put together this letter and send the Council members a copy. Motion passed.

Laurie announced there will be a Naugatuck River Forum on Feb 24th. Several towns are involved with Naugatuck River Greenway Program. See website <http://www.cogcnv.org/greenway/> for final report.

Next Meeting April 11, 2011 along the Merritt Parkway. Josh will make arrangements. Need to discuss site for June Greenways Day and develop a list of awardees.

Suggested list of high priority action items for CT Greenways in 2011:

Connectivity of trails in general
Celebrate ECGW event in Simsbury
Close gap in Farmington Heritage Trail
Involve all 169 towns with bike/ped program
DOT make significant effort to support bike/ped program
Capitalize on new DOT approach to non-motorized transportation
Merritt Trail outreach process
Permit and blaze trails in the Merritt Parkway and Griffin Line corridors
Re-energize proposal by WINCOG and NECOG to enhance surface in the 40 mile ECGW corridor from Andover east to Rhode Island state line. Could be funded if SB1502 Section 68 is bonded.
Reinstitute license plate program
Promote awareness of equines and their specific needs as pedestrians
Utility corridors as trails

Motion to adjourn meeting Mark, Josh 2nd, adjourned at 11:50 AM.

Respectfully submitted,
Jan Collins,
Interim Secretary