

Town of Belmont
COMMUNITY PATH ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Tuesday June 4th 2013
Town Hall, Conference Room 4

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MEETING NOTES

The community Path Advisory Committee (CPAC) meeting was called to order at 7:06 P.M. by it's Chairperson Jeffrey Roth.

Attendance

Committee Members: Jeffrey Roth Chairperson, John Diekman Co-Chairperson, Brian Burke Sr. revolving Secretary, Cosmos Caterino,, Joseph Noone, Kevin Sullivan , Charlie Conroy and Tommasina Olson, Constituting a quorum, 8 memebers present.

Town Official: Jeffrey Wheeler, Planning Coordinator

Selectman Mark Paolillo

Others: Community member Vincent Stanton, Yvette Tenney statistical volunteer, and Town Meeting member Phil Lawrence.

Approval of Minutes from May 22nd 2013 Meeting approved with minor changes. Motion made by Brian and seconded by Joe, and unanimously approved.

Discussion of capturing information from Public Questionnaire. By Ms. Tenney a volunteer working with the committee. She explained of the 30 pages with 90 categories that were coded and categorized with the help of another volunteer, the concerns most raised by respondents were; where the path should go, what amenities should be provided, e.g., lights, benches, water fountains etc., Safety concerns not of the nature of being too close to a rail but that of crime and vandalism. Pro-path comments and concern for the train were worked out between the two data collectors to a point of 70% accuracy and agreement. Ms. Tenney would like to tweak it to 80% agreement between the two analyzing parties. The status of completed data was 20% and additional 20% almost done with the remaining balance of work to take between two to three additional weeks. It was raised and discussed that the second public forum would be a good time to present these numbers and other results of the Questionnaire.

Discussion of the Rail Trail adjacent to the tracks. Charlie explained the results of the Belmont residents only versus combined results. Graphs and pie charts were distributed and Charlie continued, eleven different categories. Tomi expressed concern that a Town Meeting member Cindy Taylor had raised the question of how safe is it to have a path along a rail. Charlie continued that the results of the data collected showed Belmont residents overwhelmingly were either very supportive or supportive of the rail-with-trail concept. Discussion was diverted momentarily to the Channing Road neighbors that have expressed concerns about a rail trail along the former Mass Central Rail Road corridor, and who have asked what mitigation might be forthcoming to those with concerns. Some of these residents would like to see a commitment to not just a fence but a barrier of sorts that would not allow people to see through the impediment. It was pointed out that in one conversation with a Channing Road resident who was initially against a rail trail, that at the Public Forum #1 on Feb. 27th she had asked what happens to the land behind her home if nothing is built there. Would the fences, plantings and security be provided in that case? She looked over the plan and said she was more in favor of getting this work done as long as it includes some provision for drainage and these safety and privacy features. The

discussion was directed by Chairperson Roth back to a review of the maps and spread sheets of elements of the proposed routes. He further asked any members that had alternatives please document them and do basic due diligence with the appropriate owners or agencies. This would involve drafting the alternative route and providing that to the committee. Joe agreed to contact the School Department about access through the school property sports fields. Brian suggested an addition to the "green scheme" plan already submitted to make it 100% off road by adding a pedestrian underpass below the extremely busy Brighton Street crossing to Alewife station.

MBTA Meeting May 31 3013. Although not on the agenda much information that was gleaned from a very productive meeting which took place at the State Transportation Building with Public official Jeff Wheeler, committee Chairperson Jeff Roth and co-chairperson John Dieckmann, and committee members Brian and Price. Discussions included freight uses for the rails in off peak hours, speed of the train, can they lower it --- absolutely not they are trying to speed it up was their response. Reluctance to approve a lease if it included grade crossings, handicap access to the station in conjunction with our building a path, query about the contamination, insurance available, safety concerns with no fence. A sample lease was provided and a promise from the head of construction operations to provide any topographical information that was garnered from any of their recent surveys. They provided John with the contact info and the plans if available would be sent to us. The MBTA officials mentioned that most contamination of any significant magnitude was typically from an abutter and not the railroad. Contaminants are usually on the top five feet and might include defoliants. These are generally capped through most trail leases as a result of paving the surface. Cosmo raised the issue of 60-100 cars a night bringing ethanol along the rail. They told us at the meeting that some cars were coming through but didn't commit to the number or cargo type. The tunnel under the Alexander Avenue section of the rail was discussed, and the MBTA would be in favor of that versus an overhead crossing. Chairperson Roth asked of the improvements to the line over the next two years could be coordinated with the effort to do our improvements, which was met with a general consensus by MBTA officials, of yes we would like that.

Evaluation Criteria Returning to the discussion on the agenda, a sample suggested route 4H was discussed for rating purposes only so that committee members could understand the thought process that was used in putting together the charts to rate the routes. This particular route went along Concord Avenue to Clay Pit Pond and continued on roads and streets to Brighton Street, and crossing the rail line at grade to the existing Alewife portion of the completed rail-trail. Much discussion ensued about having more detail regarding raised beds, driveway encroachments, crossings on the rail, lack of off use activities and generally not having to read between the lines when analyzing and giving a grade to the various routes. It was agreed and Charleie would generate more specific language and circulate it around.

Notifying the Police & Fire Chiefs for the possibility of appearing for a brief appearance so that we might get their perspectives on the various routes. It was suggested by John that we might forward the various plans and descriptions to them in advance so they might be able to make more informed comments. Joe Noone will make the contact to the Police Department, and Jeff will contact the Fire Department.

Selectman Scheduled CPAC Update July 15th 2013 Selectman Paolillo, suggested that instead of a ten-minute update perhaps they would pencil in a half hour to give time to show the various routes and discuss some of the input from the survey. Chairperson Roth agreed.

Motion to adjourn made by Brian and seconded by Joe at 9:10 P.M. to adjourn the meeting.