

SAUCON RAIL TRAIL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

Date: Monday, August 22, 2011
Time: 5:05 PM
Location: Lower Saucon Township

Present: Jack Cahalan, Lower Saucon Township Manager; Roger Jurczak and Jerry Holum, Lower Saucon Township; Steve LaBrake, Hellertown Borough; Dawn Kresge, Coopersburg Borough Manager, Tom Beil, Upper Saucon Township Manager. Frank Pazzaglia, Hellertown Borough arrived at 5:09 PM.

Guests: Susan Katz, Bob Yeager, Charles Hampton

- **Welcome – Township/Borough Managers** – Jack welcomed everyone. He said the minutes have been distributed from the meeting of July 25, 2011. He said if there are no additions or corrections, they will post them on the Lower Saucon Township website.
- **Intermunicipal Agreement Status – Update** – Jack said the intermunicipal agreement is ready for final approval. Hellertown has already approved it. He plans on getting it approved by our Council on September 7th. Tom said perhaps they should change the effective date from September 1st to October 1st. All the agreements should be kept the same, but if Hellertown has already adopted it, then they should probably keep it at September 1st. Jack said he will get signatures on it and get it to Dawn. By September 19th, they should have all of them signed. Tom said each municipality should get an original copy. Jack said what they put in there was the Commission, which is what the committee is going to be called, will have a small budget of about \$4,000.00. That will be based on contributions that the four municipalities will make after this is approved. That could be used to pay for small items that you need in order to keep the Commission moving along for operational costs and expenses. It does explain that donations have to be designated for which portion of the trail it is for. If it's not, then it would be divided equally among the four municipal partners. Steve said the first thing is getting a website up.
- **Trail Development – Updates**
 - **Jack Cahalan – Lower Saucon Township** – Jack said their section of the trail has been opened a couple of months. Hundreds of people are using it on a daily basis. It's a pretty popular trail. The only thing they have been working on with Hellertown Borough is the mile marker system. If you've been out on the trail, you've seen the development on the markers. He had pictures for the group of the mileage markers. After talking to Roger and Steve, they are thinking of giving it a name that denotes the distance. He knows a lot of people are interested in what the distances are between the posts when they are traveling up and down the trail. The first one is called the Half Mile Post. Those are the 6' rectangular wood posts that Roger worked on and those were sponsored by Saucon Valley Bikes and Advanced Optics in Hellertown Borough. Those markers are located at mile post 53, 52-1/2 and 52 in Hellertown Borough, 51-1/2, 50, and at 50-1/2 located in Lower Saucon Township. They explained at previous meetings that they were based on the historic marking system that the North Penn Railroad and then SEPTA used when they operated the rail line from Philadelphia to Bethlehem. They look terrific with the way they've been stained. They look very natural and they indicate SRT on them and the municipality which would be Lower Saucon Township (LST) or Hellertown Borough (HB). In the next photograph you can see the little plaque showing who sponsored the mile marker. To supplement the half mile posts, they had discussed an additional system to aid trail users and emergency responders for location purposes. In the event someone calls in with an emergency, they'd be able to identify where they were on the trail when they made the call and when the responders came to the trail to provide assistance, they'd be able to locate where the injured party was on the trail. These Quarter Mile Posts are 4'x4' wood posts which are installed every quarter mile. To also add to the location system, they came up with a color-coded designation for each of the municipalities. It is green for Hellertown and orange for Lower Saucon Township. They have reflective tape that will be put on the quarter

mile posts so people should be able to see either the half mile post or the quarter mile post to identify where they are in the event they have to call in. That will also assist them in telling them how far they traveled on the trail. The last one is what we are calling Roadway Posts. That is also something the emergency responders asked them to do. They wanted the names of the streets that cross the rail trail on posts. They have six of those, Bachman, Water and Walnut Street in Hellertown; and Meadows, Old Mill and Bingen Road in Lower Saucon Township. What they are working on is wooden posters to make it look natural with the street name routed horizontally on the post so it would be visible to trail users and to people coming onto the crossing. Roger has also worked out an additional system where he will locate the numbers for the mile post markers on the backs of the stop signs on the trail so they will be visible to the responders who are coming up that road crossing to get onto the trail. They have to have the gate opened. If they know they are heading to mile post 52-1/2, they'll know what street to take to get on the trail and which will be the quickest route to that mile post. They are putting this together and discussed it with Northampton County 9-1-1 and they are in favor of it. They just have to get it finished and get it out there so everyone understands it. Steve said five of the next six posts for Upper Saucon have sponsors, so they need one more sponsor. Roger was shooting for the end of October to get those complete. They received one check so far. Jerry asked if the roadway posts were going to be on the north and south side or just on one side of the intersection? Jack said one side, and he's not sure if it's north or south. Jerry asked why they wouldn't be on both sides? Jack said they were just identifying the street name and wouldn't have to have it on both sides to tell you what the name is. Susan asked if there would be more signs on the road? Roger said he thinks the mile marker on Old Mill is about 25' back from the road. Jack asked Roger to explain about the roadway posts. What side of the road are they going to be located on: the north or south side? Roger said pretty much all on the north side. Jack said is the street name visible on two sides? Roger said yes, it's a square post and the two faces that have the name of the street are on the V, so that the outside of the trail is positioned properly and if you are coming north or south, you can see them. Regarding the reflective tape, when the mile markers and the street signs were discussed, the issue of color coding of the trail being a desirable aspect was discussed and strongly recommended. If they could use color coding, it would be an additional feature in addition to the identification of the mile markers where it told you what spot you were in. It was simplified that it would use no more than four color codes, one for each municipality. They talked about it at Lower Saucon and Hellertown. They weren't sure if Upper Saucon or Coopersburg would be interested in it. What they chose was two colors, green for Hellertown and orange for Lower Saucon. It was felt that inasmuch as they were going to do the roadway posts and half mile markers and maybe something up the road, would get a strip of tape. At the beginning of the color coded concept, they thought there were sufficient telegraph poles along the trail and they would mark each telegraph pole with the respective color. With only markers initially at half mile intervals, distances are really out of view in many cases. It was decided that there were too many negatives about the telegraph poles. A lot of them have fallen down. Some were 500' to 600' between each pole. What the Manager's did at a meeting at Water Street Park was they decided to put in quarter mile markers. They would wrap the post with the respective color for the municipality; and that would substitute for the telegraph poles that were dropped and the intermediate poles between the half mile and mile markers are pressure treated 4'x4' poles. Those posts will be wrapped with a single strand of the reflective color coded tape. The quarter mile and half mile posts are all in. None of those yet have the color coded tape on them. The roadway posts are in Roger's driveway and are being prepared. The first of that post has the tape on it and when they turn the posts over to the municipalities for planting, they will be color coded. They are a highly reflective tape product and should get longevity. The tape is used on all the latest street signs. It's a product state-of-the art for reflectivity. With the street markers having that, there should be no reason why the low light conditions that do exist, you won't be able to identify a street sign or mile marker. Jack said this was put together so they could get it out and post it on the kiosk in Hellertown so the people who are getting on the trail understand how it works and what it's there for, what the mile marker numbers represent and the history of them. If it's okay, they will get it out and post it on the Township and Borough website and Steve can put it on the Facebook page. Jack said they are still negotiating on acquiring the trailhead property which is being used by the public, but they want to acquire it from the owner. They indicated they will accept their price, but they haven't gotten any

paper work completed. They have a grant in to the state for half of the cost. They were recipients of a grant similar to Hellertown from the D&L Lehigh Valley Greenways Committee for trail amenities like benches, trash containers, picnic tables, and they intend on putting them up at the trailhead. A port-a-john will give them restroom facilities, which is the halfway point between Hellertown and Upper Saucon. They are still working on that. They got an indication that there's a tee area where the Saucon Valley Country Club may be interested in putting up some trees to buffer the area. We are waiting for them to give us a plan. Roger asked if they were suggesting evergreens? Jack said they have no indications yet of what they are suggesting.

- **Hellertown Borough** – Steve said there's talk about tying into the Farmer's Market and doing a fall hayride with a tractor and going over some historic features along the trail. It would be a cool asset to the Farmer's Market and would really be fun. Jack asked if it would be on a Sunday? Steve said yes. Jack said he was asked by Cathy Kichline to find out the status of the bike-friendly map and whether it will include bike-friendly and dog friendly locations which were brought up at the Borough Business Revitalization meeting. Steve said someone at the Chamber is working on a map of Hellertown right now. The businesses all have to pay to get on the map, so we'll see what businesses are on there. Once the map is actually produced, he was going to add bike friendly businesses and some sort of designation to that map. It's a matter once the map is published, he'll be happy to work on it. The particular map will be for Hellertown to help drive some business to town. He asked Tom if the color-coded mile markers would help them out? Tom said yes, it would. Dawn said she would prefer yellow for Coopersburg. She asked what was the cost of the tape? Roger said it's about \$60.00 for a roll of 2" wide tape. What they found out with the orange is it was not available at 2", so they bought what was available which was 4". Jack said does Coopersburg have a half mile mark? Roger said he's not sure, but they are going to end up with at least two posts doing the quarter mile concept.
- **Dawn Kresge – Coopersburg Borough** – No report.
- **Upper Saucon Township** – No report.

- **Mileage Markers** – Talked about above.

- **Memorial Benches** – Jack said the Scott Pino from Eternal Products in Coopersburg had shown them a bench and actually brought it to one of the meetings they had in Coopersburg. It looked pretty substantial. They had Public Works take a look at it. He has a couple of those benches at Living Memorial Park with sponsor plaques on them. They look pretty attractive, durable and sturdy. He gave us the price list. They checked that out and Jack put together something and took it to Lower Saucon Township Council and they approved the benches out on the trail. It's primarily for individuals and organizations. They are not looking for any commercial sponsors at this point. He's been approached by a couple of groups who said they would like to get a bench for a departed member. The cost is \$995.00 for the bench, engraving the plaque, placing the plaque on the bench, assembling the bench and installing it on a location on the trail. They went out and looked at seven locations on the trail. They purposely picked locations that were away from any residences so there wouldn't be any complaints coming from the use of the bench. They are in secluded areas which are very scenic, beautiful and quiet. People can sit and enjoy the outdoors. Lower Saucon Township decided on the color of green for the benches. The PATCH covered it after the meeting, but he will put it out on the website and he'll let Steve know about it for the Facebook page. Someone asked what the bench was made of? Jack said it's cast aluminum, and is a very good product. Roger asked if they were concerned about vandalism? Jack said it weighs 210 pounds, and it's pretty strong. It's compatible with what we use in the parks. Charles asked if they were pretty much set on this bench? Jack said yes, for Lower Saucon. Charles said the reason he asked was he doesn't know how he could raise \$995 for a bench. If it was \$500.00 or \$600.00, he doesn't think he'd have a problem. Jack said that's the cost of the bench and he's not adding a lot to it. They did look up a comparable bench and it was \$100.00 cheaper, but that didn't add in shipping, assembling it, installing the plaque, so that's a good price for a good bench. It's pretty sturdy. If the seven locations are taken up, they will look at other locations. He's pretty leery about putting it near any residences. They wanted to have something overlooking the Saucon Creek, but if you go and look at how much room you have, it's not safe. It's right on the edge, so they

moved it over to the hillside. Jerry asked if the trail was wide enough and where are the benches located? Jack said off the trail. Once they are located, they will put gravel around them. It's not going to impede anyone who is walking or riding a bike.

➤ **Other Issues**

- Jerry said the trail has to be wider somehow in Lower Saucon. Jack said he gets different opinions on that. He thinks it's better the way it is. Jerry said Hellertown's is 2' wider than Lower Saucon's. Jerry said he's been on the trail a lot and when you get women out there with their children and they are pushing their carriages, it gets very difficult to get around them. Someone said that it should be common courtesy of the people pushing the stroller. Jack said it's a trail, not a sidewalk and not a highway. That trail as far as being 10' wide, is a lot wider than other rail trails he's been on. Steve said there are some places there is vegetation growing and it looks narrower.
- Roger said the kiosk has been nicely upgraded with crushcrete so that as you approach it, it's a lot easier to get around. He thinks that could be done around the benches so as to keep vegetation down. Roger said when he was going through the various maps when you were getting ready for the mile markers, it was apparent from the maps that each of the four municipalities had a train station. He understands the Hellertown train station was torn down in the 80's. He'd like to see if we could identify those locations with a sign that will say the name of the station. It would be a nice enhancement.
- Steve said once they get the mile markers done, they'd like to look at the historic markers. Roger said that he would like to work on something for the former train stations that were located along the rail line. Frank said anything you would do with the stations would be a more comprehensive plan to identify the historical and cultural features on the trail. That's like the next step after the mile markers. Jack said Jerry has done a lot of work on the historic sites with Jennifer and that's a great idea.
- Roger asked about the hayride on the trail. Steve said he thinks it would be in the fall. He's sure you are going to see a big surge of people on the trail in September and October. The Chamber of Commerce in Hellertown is working on a plan for spring to do some kind of Chamber event along the rail trail as well, highlighting some businesses and maybe bringing a tent down to the trail and people can sample food from local businesses. It may be on a Sunday in conjunction with the Farmer's Market.
- Jack said the update on the High Street bridge, Hellertown has been notified that Norfolk Southern will build another bridge. They are working out the maintenance responsibilities between the City of Bethlehem and Hellertown Borough. Frank said the interesting thing is they are investing money in that bridge and it's great as it maintains the trails continuity. That's the best option. The bridge over Saucon Creek is out. Maybe there's not going to be very fast movement on that. Jack said it belongs to the County and the County does not have funding. Frank said in the meantime the continuity is maintained as nobody is using the current bridge.
- Jack said the South Bethlehem Greenway is now open and the City is looking at funding for the additional length of their greenway to Saucon Park. He talked to their Planner and they are looking ahead for funding to connect with our trail at Bachman Street. That has to be purchased from Norfolk Southern. Steve said someone told him that when they pushed Crushcrete back for the bus parking, they actually leased the railroad for the storage of the product. Jack said they understood that they had a lease even before the parking lot was relocated. Frank said what's the implication of that? Steve said then Norfolk Southern has leased it to Crushcrete? Jack said yes. We heard that back when they were talking to SEPTA. He doesn't know what they are using it for, but they do have a lease.
- Frank said if you haven't been on the Bethlehem Greenway, what they have developed so far is very impressive and very nice. Being able to connect that to the SRT would be pretty impressive.

It would be a big deal as that trail is really nice. Steve said there are a lot of people who want to do that.

- Frank said when all the signing happens on the Intermunicipal Agreement and the advisory board becomes official, is that the right time that things like fun runs or an actual setting of a program, can be addressed? Jack said yes. Frank said we want to get that on the agenda for a future meeting. You are talking about the fall, and that's when they could do fundraisers or fun runs, things like that.
- Steve said by the next meeting, all the municipalities will have signed the Intermunicipal Agreement. Then they have to start discussing maintenance on the trail with volunteer groups. Jack said he's working on something on his end. He can come back with something like an adopt-a-road program. That was one of the suggestions. One of the things with the benches, there is potential to beautify the areas around the benches. Some are at great spots and you could do some plantings to make it really nice. .
- Jack asked Tom about the trail tenders. Tom said a number of people are interested, but he's not sure if they are officially organized yet. Steve said do we know exactly what we want the responsibility of the trail tenders to be other than picking up trash? Jack said Tom had Dennis Scholl from the D & L Trail Tender group come down to his meeting and he is sure Dennis would be glad to come to one of these meetings if we asked him. Tom said he will email everyone what their Environmental Advisory Council has done to date. Steve said that's one of the next big steps. There was a comment on Facebook about what are the plans for cleaning up after storms because this particular person was running right after a storm and there were all kinds of branches all over the place on the trail. If we get the trail tenders thing going, that can be part of it as well. Jack said they can put the branches on the side and one of the Public Works crews can come along and pick it up. Steve said if there's something big along the trail, Public Works can pick it up or if someone notices something, they can just call Public Works. Charles said the Hellertown Lions are anxious to do anything they are asked to do as far as maintenance on the trail.
- Jack said the geocachers are out on the trail. There are two or three he already approved on the Lower Saucon section and he just got three more requests. They are just small little storage containers or tubes that they put stuff in. If you want to check it out, you can go to the geocaching site and put in the zip code and that will give you the list on the sites along the trail. It's pretty popular. He's putting together a policy for the Township for all kinds of geocaching in their parks and on the trail. They are not supposed to disturb anything or put it any place along the trail like back in the woods where anyone would be going in and out. Most of them are around fences and places like that.
- Bob Yeager from Lower Saucon Township said he was on the trail for the first time on Friday. His business in the Township sponsors Adopt-a-Highway for PennDOT. He has the stretch from Black River Road South to Saucon Valley Road. He'd like to get involved with trash clean-up on the trail because there is some trash on the trail. He'd like to organize whatever you would need. Another thing he does is he's a part-time worker at Saucon Valley Country Club. He does all the tree work for Weyhill. He has the equipment. He has whatever you need to maintain the trail. He said don't waste the taxpayers' dollars and send five guys out from the Public Works Department. Let's do it together. He would volunteer his expertise, his equipment, his time to do this. He thinks the community should maintain the trail, not Public Works. If we do it as volunteers, we could get it done much faster than the red tape. He's here to volunteer for clean up and/or tree work. He prunes for professionals. He has the equipment to do it. He can get 18' off the ground without even getting off the ground. He can cut 10" limbs 18' off the ground. He's just a phone call away. Regarding the SVCC maintenance yard, they are trying their best with the grass. Those are grass clippings and they put lime down and chipper cuttings, but he doesn't think you'll ever get rid of that smell. Someone said if you mix it with leaves, it helps. Bob said he had an idea when he was on the trail. He would take a picture of the trail and put it on a free T-shirt to anyone who helped clean up the trail. He has a vision on what he'd want to put on the T-shirt. It wouldn't cost anyone

anything and it would be a pretty cool shirt. It's in the form of getting involved and you get a free T-shirt. Roger said he thinks that a great contribution. We are in the process of getting to the point if they would implement that, there are a lot of things in place now and we'd look for some leadership. Bob said if a tree gets hit in the country club, he goes out and cleans it up. He has five years experience in doing tree work. Roger said thank you very much for volunteering your time. Bob says he does a lot and if he can help out, he will. Roger said Bob is the type of people who will be very helpful to their group.

- Jerry asked if Bob takes telegraph down poles as there are two in Lower Saucon Township that should be taken down. They are in the area where Lower Saucon Township is going to be building the parking lot. He didn't notice any poles in Upper Saucon.
- Susan said once this committee is formed, and it is almost formed, what is the impact of the various Council's? Does a committee representative go to each meeting? Hellertown decided they were going to put in benches one day. She felt like they were pulling the rug out from under the committee. Jack said that was pushed along because they weren't officially formed and the committee wasn't able to come up with a consensus on those issues. Each municipality is doing things on their own based on whatever their priority is. For example, the mile markers become a priority in Lower Saucon and Hellertown because of circumstances. The bench thing is something he wanted to move along on. Tom said if the Intermunicipal Agreement is adopted by all four municipalities, all four municipalities have voting representatives to the Advisory Committee. The way it's supposed to work is the Advisory Committee meets once a month and they just discuss things they'd like to see happen on the trail, programs, things like that. Then they go back to their representatives and they try to get those items funded or in the budget. They are only advisory, but they are supposed to go back and communicate with the governing body they represent. It is really up to the governing body to approve the funding for major purposes on the rail trail. Someone said a governing body would not propose some new change to the trail. Tom said you wouldn't think so, but because they are the elected officials, if they want to totally ignore the Advisory Committee and they want to be counterproductive, they have the ultimate say what happens in their municipality. If they want to do something totally different than what was recommended, they have the power to do that as they are your elected representatives. Someone said we have to make the volunteers know about any upcoming Council meetings where there may be a problem. Tom said our governing bodies are very busy with zoning issues, with planning issues and he's sure they don't want to interfere with the rail to trail. They are going to trust the Advisory Committee. Everyone wants to work together and we're all on the same page. He really doesn't see it being a big issue. You can't take final authority on budgeting decisions and making trail rules. You can't take that away from your elected representatives.
- Roger asked if the Intermunicipal Agreement would be published so the public could see it? Jack said they can put it on the website. It actually follows the format of what we've been doing all along.

- The meeting adjourned at 6:14 PM. Next meeting – September 26th at Hellertown Borough @ 5:00 PM; October 24th at Coopersburg Borough @ 5:00 PM; November 28th at Lower Saucon Township.