

SAUCON RAIL TRAIL OVERSIGHT COMMISSION MEETING

Date: Monday, November 28, 2011
Time: 5:00 PM
Location: Upper Saucon Township Building

Present: Lower Saucon Township:
Roger Jurczak
Jerry Holum
Hellertown Borough:
Steve LaBrake
Chuck Hampton
Coopersburg Borough:
Dawn Kresge, Borough Manager
Erin Frederick
Upper Saucon Township:
Joseph Geib, Special Projects Coordinator
Sara Pandl
Peter Jarrett
Susan Henderson

John Brunner, Appalachian Mountain Club

Welcome – Township/Borough Managers

Chairman Jurczak welcomed everyone, and had all the representatives introduce themselves.

Public Comment

Trees were down along the Saucon Rail Trail in Lower Saucon Township following the Halloween winter storm. Volunteers (including Steve and Chuck) cleared some downed trees from the Hellertown and Lower Saucon sections of the trail. They only pushed the trees to the side of the trail, as the volunteers do not have the appropriate chainsaw certifications. Steve would like to see if some volunteers could obtain chainsaw certifications, in order to help out with emergency maintenance.

Upper Saucon Township Road Department cleared the downed trees and fixed the broken fence sections along their section of trail.

Roger mentioned that the topics of volunteer maintenance and municipal participation will be covered in the presentation during tonight's meeting. Roger also stated that the Ironton Rail Trail might have a volunteer/municipal maintenance policy that might be worth looking at.

Minutes

The minutes for the October 24 meeting were approved on a 7-0 vote by the Commission.

Financial

October Financial Report

Balance as of October 31: \$1,000, from dues received from Upper Saucon Township. There are no entries for expenses. The dues from Lower Saucon Township will be coming soon. All municipal dues should be received by the end of the year.

There possibly is an outstanding bill for the Logo Design. Roger will check with Jack Cahalan about the status of the outstanding bill.

Logo Design

Steve brought up the possibility of future changes to the logo to incorporate the names of other municipalities

(such as Bethlehem, Richland Twp., and Springfield Twp.), upon expansion of the Trail to those areas.

Discussion for such a case brought up ideas such as possibly eliminate the municipal names altogether from the logo, to only have the name of the municipality in which the logo is being used included on the logo (which would necessitate having more than one logo drafted and used). Having a different logo for each municipality could add to the cost of the design, manufacture, and installation of the signage.

Jerry brought up the observation that the logo only depicts hikers, and did not include bikers or dog walkers. While some other rail-trail logos in the area do and do not depict the multi-use nature of the trail, the Commission decided to stay with the current design of the trail, in the interest of simplicity and to keep the cost of the logo design to a minimum.

The Commission moved to keep the logo as currently presented (with the names of the 4 municipalities included). **The motion passed on a 7-0 vote by the Commission.**

2012 Meetings

The Commission reviewed the tentative dates for the 2012 meeting schedule. The dates are presented to have the meetings held on the fourth Monday of every month. The meeting locations will rotate through the four municipalities of Lower Saucon Township, Upper Saucon Township, Hellertown Borough, and Coopersburg Borough.

The Commission made a motion to move the start time of the 2012 meetings to 6:00 PM, and cancel the meetings in May and December due to holidays. **The motion passed on a 7-0 vote by the Commission.**

Website

Steve presented the information on possible consultants for the website. Steve based his estimates on having 8-10 pages of content, including:

- Printable maps (with historical information)
- Mile Marker information
- Photo gallery
- Link to Facebook page
- Calendar
- Geocache information
- Rules
- Local businesses (sponsors, and trail-friendly)
- Bench/donation information

The Commission would also like to have access to be able to perform small updates to the page from time to time. They might also want to look into selling banner ads to local businesses and trail-related businesses to help defray the cost of the design and web hosting.

Before selecting a consultant, the Commission members will view and evaluate some samples from the consultants. The consultants may be asked to come to a meeting and provide a presentation and answer questions.

The content for the website is not yet written, and will be finalized by the Commission for the website. The Commission would like the website to be more informative and a better design than the Ironton Rail Trail website. They are encouraged to view the website of other rail-trails, to find elements that they do and do not like. Some samples include the Ironton Rail Trail, Walkway Over the Hudson, the Walkill Valley Trail, and the Allegheny Passage Trail.

The list of possible consultants includes PLP Web Design, 110 Front, and Cassandra Yorgey. The particulars of each proposal include:

PLP Design

\$250 - \$350 for a home page (\$350-\$450 for Flash-enabled pages). \$150-\$350 for each additional page. Costs do not include monthly fees for web hosting. Costs look to be near \$1,400, plus the hosting costs. Steve does not seem to like this proposal.

110 Front

\$1,200, plus \$95/year hosting fees. Proposal includes 2 rounds of revisions to draft site, and 1 revision to site rollout.

Cassandra Yorgey

\$500 for a Wordpress-style site. Maintenance and other social media integration can be priced at a later time.

Erin Frederick's associate

\$600 for basic custom site layout. \$1,100 for premium site layout.

Mile Markers

Roger is currently working on the 5 markers for the Upper Saucon Township portion of the Trail. They will soon be ready for pickup. The locations for these posts will need to be marked, and the Upper Saucon Township Road Department will install the posts. The measurement will begin at the last mile marker in Lower Saucon Township, between Bingen Road and Spring Valley Road.

Benches

No benches have been purchased to date. Upper Saucon Township staff will locate their desired locations for the benches.

Bethlehem Greenway

This railway-turned-trail in Bethlehem's South Side has a 50' right-of-way, and a meandering path. When users approach a street crossing, they find the street names imprinted in the pavement near the crossing. There are 4 benches at each crossing, with 2 additional benches in mid-block locations.

Kiosks

There currently is a kiosk in Hellertown's Water Street Park. This kiosk was built and installed by a local Boy Scout troop, and designed by Roger Jurczak. The design also includes a "green roof", with succulent plants, a project of the late Carolyn Lidie.

The Commission is looking to have more kiosks installed along the trail at key locations. They might go to the Saucon Rail Trail Facebook page and other media outlets to solicit help in construction and installation. They might also be looking for sponsorship to provide the matching funds necessary for materials.

The Commission is looking to dedicate the green roof on the Water Street Park kiosk to the memory of Carolyn Lidie.

Steve would like to place a map of downtown businesses at the kiosks in Hellertown. He is in possession of the Hellertown Borough business map, and will look to modify it to fit the available room on the board at the kiosk. He is also looking to highlight the dog- and bike- friendly businesses to the trail users.

Trail Tenders

Dennis Scholl from the Delaware & Lehigh Heritage Corridor was in attendance to give a presentation on their Trail Tenders program. The Commission is looking for insight on forming a Trail Tenders program to have a community-based approach to some trail maintenance and improvement projects.

Some notes from the presentation include:

- Trail Patrols: they alert Trail Tenders and municipalities to issues and problem areas
- Signs are posted at Trail Tender projects, as a way to draw interest and possibly volunteers.
- Trail Tenders set up goals and a management plan, and then host outreach for volunteers.
- Trail Tenders alert the municipalities to their needs for the projects, the proposed project days, and provide a walk-thru of the project and the requested support from the municipality (equipment, materials, preparations, labor).
- Trail Tenders host spring and fall cleanup days along the Trail.
- Trail Tenders install interpretive signs along the trail, informing users of historical and ecological areas of interest.

The Commission has asked Mr. Scholl to help them with the identification and management of invasive species in certain problem areas along the Trail.

Saucon Mile Race

Jaime Gottshall presented the idea for a mile-long race along the Saucon Rail Trail to the Upper Saucon Township Park & Recreation Commission. Her idea is to have the race start along the Trail, probably near Spring Valley Road, and to finish in the Upper Saucon Township Park. The race organizers hope to have everyone grouped and run in heats of 5-year age brackets. This would mean that the event will last a few hours.

The Commission suggested that the organizers have someone acting as a “sweeper” along the trail, notifying trail users that the race heat will be coming through.

The Commission also suggested that we post notices for this event along the Upper Saucon Township section of Trail well in advance of the race date, to alert other users of the heavy use that day, so they can plan accordingly. The Commission also noted that it might be a good idea to install small signboards near the road crossings, so notices can be posted to alert users of events, maintenance, or closures.

Other Business

Pete Jarrett was wondering if the SRTOC could join the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy as a group/agency.

Pete also asked if the Commission was interested in joining the Keystone Trails Association. Part of the KTA’s activities include trail advocacy with the government. Being aligned with them may allow the SRTOC to get some lobbying interest and possibly grant funding opportunities.

Pete Jarrett forwarded the Rails-to-Trails newsletter to the Commission members. Roger encouraged Pete to continue doing so.

Erin Frederick mentioned that the Appalachian Mountain Club now has an AMC “Hike the Highlands” mobile app. In the app, you can find local trails and recreation areas within the Highlands region, of which the Saucon Valley is a part of. Erin will look to add the Saucon Rail Trail to the list of activities.

The meeting adjourned at 7:10 PM.

Next Meeting – 6:00 PM, January 23, 2012 – Lower Saucon Township