

U&D Corridor Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes

DATE & TIME: October 7, 2015 – 6:30

LOCATION: Karen L. Binder Library

PRESIDING OFFICER: Chairman Tracey Bartels

LEGISLATIVE STAFF: Krista Barringer, Deputy Clerk

PRESENT: Legislators Herbert Litts, III, Lynn Archer (arrived 6:12 PM), Carl Belfiglio, David Donaldson (via phone/non-voting; left at 7:11 PM), Manna Jo Greene (arrived 6:06 PM), Jeanette Provenzano and Kenneth Ronk, Jr.

ABSENT: Legislator James Maloney

QUORUM PRESENT: Yes

OTHER ATTENDEES: Randy Gustafson and Gordon Lattey, Stone Consulting; Chris White, Deputy Director of Planning; John Grossbohlín, City of Kingston Complete Streets Advisory Council Member; Kathy Nolan, Friends of Catskill Rail Trail Co-Chair and Member Ulster County Trails Advisory Committee; Kevin Smith Friends of Catskill Rail Trail Co-Chair and Woodstock Land Conservancy President; Fred Kurds, Homeowner in the Towns of Hurley and Shandaken; Ernie Hunt, Catskill Mountain Rail Road President; Jennifer Schwartz-Berky, Kingston Historic Landmarks Preservation Commissioner; and William Sheldon, Ulster County Resident

Chairman Bartels called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

Motion No 1: Approving the minutes September 14, 2015 as presented.

Motion Made By: Legislator Belfiglio

Motion Seconded By: Legislator Litts

Roll Call Vote: No

Voting In Favor: Legislators Bartels, Litts, Belfiglio, Provenzano and Ronk

Voting Against: None

No. of Votes in Favor: 5

No. of Votes Against: 0

Disposition: Approved

Chairman Bartels introduced Randy Gustafson and Gordon Lattey from Stone Consulting and opened up a discussion regarding the focus of the tour on the corridor scheduled for tomorrow. She noted the goal of having the Committee clear of what to focus on. She noted Legislator Belfiglio, Department of Planning Deputy Director White and CMRR President Hunt would be joining them on the tour.

Mr. Gustafson stated they were at the Committee's disposal. He stated the project was a moving target that will continue to move over the two-month project period. He noted their desire to find out what to focus on and noted what had already been studied. He noted a web site was established and Senior Legislative Employee Tantillo uploaded all the existing documents to this location for them to access.

Legislator Belfiglio noted as stated in the initial wording of the RFP, he felt this was a simple look for the highest and best use of the corridor with considerations for economic development, health and transportation. Legislator Ronk concurred with the highest and best use of the corridor study with a consideration of feasibility in the study. Legislator Provenzano agreed that the study should address reality what would be wishful thinking.

Mr. Gustafson noted the track was not in the center of the right of way which had been a result of changes over time to enable the increase of speed, moving curves, and the impact on the easement and grades. He noted the problem reported with the C-9 bridge abutments and queried if it was addressed. He noted there had been abutment shifts and provided examples of engineering issues for either option (railroad or rail trail).

Legislator Litts stated he envisioned a segmented approach to the report with the highest and best approach identified for each segment. Legislator Greene concurred with Legislator Litts and felt this should also include recognition that different constituents would access the corridor. She noted the corridor is intended for both residents and tourists with different levels of abilities and the report should consider the full range of abilities.

Mr. Gustafson noted the reports reviewed contained dated information with the example of the activity prior to the CMRR's special train rides being very different. He indicated this might provide a cut off date for information. He noted the Camoin study did not include the attendance data from the Walkway over the Hudson. Legislator Archer noted the connectivity of trails with the Walkway. Mr. Gustafson indicated the Walkway was in it's own special category and expressed concern when it's daily use numbers are being used as examples. He noted railroads must report to the Federal Government the numbers of rail passengers and that this was public information that went back to the late 1970's. He indicated it would be equally unfair to show the largest railroad figures. He stated a median tourist railroad in New York State averaged 20,000 – 50,000 in average ridership. Mr. Lattey stated this was the same for trails and that it was important to see how they count

attendance. He gave the example of counting vehicles using a sensor at a road entrance which included service vehicles and commuters in the daily counts. He discussed the difference between the economic impact versus a healthy lifestyle impact and use by those that live near a trail. He noted the economic impact of a short term local user versus a longer time spent on a trail by a tourist.

Legislator Archer suggested the report ensure an element of an integrated trail system vision and not just what is there today.

Mr. Lattey noted a prior study looked at local user versus tourist vision and the more advanced research that can be done to apply this information to the economic impact.

Mr. Gustafson felt the Camoin study was reasonably conservative with its economic predictions and noted the review of additional riders versus the number that are already using the corridor.

Legislator Belfiglio noted it was a County owned corridor and the report should keep to the utmost integrity. As such, he queried who would be the main contacts for Stone Consulting and suggested they be kept abreast of all Stone Consulting's activities. He suggested Stone Consulting go through the Legislature's contacts with any questions. Chairman Bartels replied the point people from the Legislature would be herself and Deputy Chair Litts. She noted a request for at least bi-weekly conference calls. She noted committee meeting would be held during critical junction areas and the designated point people would keep the committee apprised of Stone Consulting's activities. She noted the inclusion of a set timeline and milestones in the contract. She appreciated the fluid process they were entering and would be able to expand the review in specific areas if necessary. She noted Stone Consulting would have a line into the Planning Department with questions as needed as well as a link to stakeholder representatives, including Catskill Mountain Railroad and the Trails groups.

Chairman Bartels reiterated the goal of this meeting was to establish the focus areas for the tour to take place tomorrow.

Legislator Belfiglio asked if Stone Consulting had heard from anyone other than the Legislature. Mr. Gustafson replied he had been in contact with only Chairman Bartels and Senior Legislative Employee Tantillo. Legislator Belfiglio suggested a contact list of who to call be provided to Stone Consulting. Chairman Bartels replied the point people would work with them regarding key people to call. She noted the tight timeline in which they had to work. Legislator Provenzano noted the need to trust the people that have been hired as consultants. Legislator Litts noted the concern of outside agencies guiding or directing the consultants regarding the data points to include in the reports. Chairman Bartels noted the final decisions remained with the Legislature and that the Advisory Committee would be using the consultant's work to help develop its recommendations to the full Legislature.

Department of Planning Deputy Director White noted the Camoin Study was commissioned by the NY/NJ Trails Association and excluded the high and low outliers. He noted the details of the other levels of the study. He requested a copy of the federal data regarding ridership from Stone Consulting. He suggested a stakeholder to be included be the NYC Department of Environmental Protection. He noted 30 miles of the 38 mile corridor were within the NYC watershed.

Mr. Gustafson discussed the designation of an abandoned railroad and the inquiry as to a purchase made before full abandonment. He discussed the current railroad use ensured the right of ways and easements remained in effect.

Legislator Ronk felt in the focus for tomorrow that the tour should not miss the Hurley Mountain Road to Basin Road/Route 28A area as this had the most questions raised. Chairman Bartels queried if consideration be given to the Boiceville to Phoenicia segment. Legislator Ronk noted the CMRR's historical use of the segment from Phoenicia north. He felt there was more concern with the eastern section. He noted the western section has proven to be an operational railroad. Chairman Bartels felt a new set of eyes on the whole corridor for the highest and best use was warranted. She noted the key of determining feasibility of each option: rail, trail, or rail with trail on the whole corridor. She stated they might be looking at multiple sections and making specific recommendations based on the feasibility on each segment. She felt the economic analysis should be secondary to what is possible and how much will it cost. She noted if the County were to commit to a specific plan, the County would have to do so while also getting behind it with other resources.

Legislator Greene stated she was interested in receiving a summary of the volumes of data received. She indicated a desire for highlights, based on their experience, on areas of interest that may need to be further reviewed. Mr. Gustafson concurred and indicated he had created a spreadsheet to assist with the review of documents.

Legislator Greene indicated the use of CMRR's track car could expedite the review of the tracks during the tour tomorrow.

Mr. Gustafson inquired as to the condition of the tracks above Phoenicia. Legislator Ronk replied, just beyond Phoenicia, the length of the corridor was eaten by the Esopus Creek. Department of Planning Deputy Director White replied 5,000 linear feet, between Phoenicia and Big Indian, had been damaged by the storms. He noted the Big Indian bridge was also gone and that this was a rough area for whatever is done in the future.

Legislator Greene noted the length of the trail is parallel to Route 28 in many areas.

Mr. Gustafson queried the bid and finances for the changes to the lower end of the corridor to the river. Department of Planning Deputy Director White noted this is a separate corridor and owned by the City of Kingston. He noted the tracks and rails had been taken out of that

portion of the corridor. Mr. Grossbohlin noted there is a trolley trail in that area. Mr. Gustafson noted the standards from this project could apply to this study; such as the projected cost for stone. Ms. Schwartz-Berky stated she could provide the Iron Horse data. She noted Iron Horse received the contract for this project. Mr. Grossbohlin stated the City's out of pocket cost was nothing as they swapped the value of the removed materials for the disposal of the ties, rough grading, spreading of road grindings, and other work on the corridor.

Legislator Provenzano felt the corridor should be seen as a single track and identify where feasible for rail with trail as well as what is the cost. Mr. Gustafson provided prior examples of experience for current studies. He spoke of the location of the track to one side due to the original existence of multiple tracks on the corridor. Legislator Ronk noted the encroachment on the easement of businesses and fences.

Legislator Belfiglio requested clarification for tomorrow's tour. Mr. Hunt replied the track car was available. Department of Planning Deputy Director White reviewed the stops proposed for the tour.

Legislator Donaldson stated the tour should start from the main line hook up from the corridor and go up from there. He stated they use the track car as much as possible. He suggested the study look at the whole corridor and be realistic of what is feasible for each section with the consultant determining and defining the sections. He noted the NYC DEP's goal to change rail to trail as trail would be easier to control. He indicated a concern with where the Camoin study's numbers come from. He stated all reports should be looked at with suspect.

Chairman Bartels felt if a recommendation was proposed that deviated from the AASHTO standards that there be an explanation of how it could impact potential financial grant resources. Mr. Gustafson provided an example of his experience with a local mountain bike challenging trail. Chairman Bartels noted in some sections where there is a small trail gauge, if the proposal deviates from the AASHTO standards that it should be explained why and how it affects potential funding.

Legislator Ronk confirmed the Committee's agreement for the focus of tomorrow's tour; whether it was on the whole corridor or just the Hurley to Phoenicia segment. He noted this was a consideration of seeing a little bit of the whole corridor or focusing in on a section. Mr. Gustafson noted it was their plan to send their engineers back for a more in depth examination. Mr. Lattey spoke of the current blank space to which they will begin to develop a clearer picture.

Mr. Lattey requested copies of the annual New York State tourism report for economic impact by region with breakdown by region for 2014, 2013, and 2012.

Department of Planning Deputy Director White expressed concern with looking at a trail that is not ADA compliant with its slope standards. Chairman Bartels reiterated the Committee's role to make recommendations based on information provided and specifically the request for deviations explained.

Department of Planning Deputy Director White recommended the Alta report as a good place to start as it used standards for rail with trail.

Mr. Smith noted the importance of the interconnectivity of the trail for non-motorized transportation and the health impacts being important and now quantifiable, which were ignored in the Camoin study.

Legislator Greene stated she is interested in what financing and funding may be available for either municipalities, not for profit or for profit entities. She also queried if there was any interest from Delaware County in investing in the development of the corridor there. Mr. Gustafson provided an example of a For Profit experience and converting to a Not for Profit based on their completed report in Lebanon, Ohio.

Legislator Archer stated it was important to have standards indicated that can be validated by recognized organizations and not just assumptions made.

Legislator Litts noted the experience of the consultants having developed two standards themselves and that information provided is designed to a standard. He provided an example of lowering a profile to meet standards.

Ms. Nolan noted the standards impact on funding and economic benefits. She recommended the corridor be considered as part of the countywide trail system and economic benefit to the full system. She expressed concerns with CMRR's ridership figures. She noted they were self-reported and requested these figures be validated.

The Committee agreed that those attending the tour tomorrow would meet after the meeting concluded to discuss the schedule for the day.

Chairman Bartels noted in regards to the NYC DEP being contacted as a stakeholder that none of the Legislature on the Committee had direct communications with the DEP to date. She stated it would be valuable to have the Committee's point people, herself and Legislator Litts, at the meeting with the DEP. The Committee agreed.

The Committee agreed the tour tomorrow would be a smattering review of the whole corridor.

Chairman Bartels noted the tour would include whistle stops of the Kingston area to milepost 6, a track car from milepost 6 to the Ashokan, another track car for the rest of the

track which will include Butternut Cove, Boiceville as well as a review of the Mt. Tremper to Phoenicia track, if time allowed.

Mr. Kurds noted the communications regarding the corridor have been focused on luxury or recreation uses and that there was a lot more to it. He noted the impacts of national defense and emergency management. He felt a railroad was much more suited to these areas.

Committee members set a tentative meeting date of October 22, 2015 at 6:00 PM in the Legislative Chambers. Chairman Bartels indicated Stone Consulting would be in attendance, either in person or via tele or video conference with an update to the activities.

There being no further business before the Committee, a motion was made by Legislator Ronk, seconded by Legislator Litts and carried to adjourn the meeting at 7:38 PM.

Respectfully submitted this 9th day of October, 2015

Krista Barringer, Deputy Clerk

Minutes Approved on October 22, 2015.