

Lowell Area Recreation Authority (LARA)

Meeting Minutes

Date: June 24, 2020

Location: ZOOM Meeting – Covid-19- Emergency Executive Order

Perry Beachum (Chair) City of Lowell resident Representative
Janine Mork Vergennes Twp Treasurer- Board Representative
Betsy Davidson (Treasurer) Vergennes Twp. Resident Representative
Mark Anderson (Vise Chair) Lowell Township Trustee, Board Representative
Amanda Rogers- Lowell Township Resident Representative
Greg Canfield- City of Lowell, Council Member Representative
Laura Garrison New-At-Large Rep
Tom Gossiaux At-Large Alternate

Board Members present: Davidson, Canfield, Anderson, Hoffman, Conrad, Mork, Rogers, Garrison, Beachum, Mork

Others present: Dave Austin- citizen, engineer Williams and Works; Heather Hoffman (acting Secretary) former Vergennes Twp. Board Representative; Rich Conrad, former at- large representative

CALL TO ORDER

Vise Chairman Anderson called Meeting to order at 7:00 pm due to issues with Chairman Beachum's Zoom internet connection

AGENDA

Approval of Agenda: Davidson 1ST, Canfield 2ND- ALL YES Motion Carried

MINUTES

Motion to Approve May 13, 2020 by Canfield 1, Conrad 2nd – All voted YES- Motion Carried

Motion to Approve February 2020 and March 2020 minutes Canfield , Rogers 2nd. All voted yes. Motion carried.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Invoices to be paid:

Zachs Mowing \$545.00- Mowing, trail clean up, brush work

Hub International \$2224.00 - Insurance

Conrad Motioned Canfield 2nd - Motioned to pay the June bills as presented- all members voted YES. Motion Carried

Public Comment: Hoffman shared that she resigned as the Clerk of Vergennes Township due to professional opportunities. Davidson thanked Hoffman and Conrad for their service on the LARA Board and wished them well as they stepped down from their Board positions.

NEW BUSINESS

NEW LARA BOARD MEMBERS:

Janine Mork, New Vergennes Township Board representative- Treasurer for Vergennes Township,

Laura Garrison, New At- Large Member

Amanda Rogers- New Lowell Township Resident Representative

Tom Gossiaux, -New Alternate At-Large Member

There is an opening for the Secretary position for the LARA Board.

Rail Trail Connection: - Update:

Dave Austin gave an update/ presentation for the LARA Phase II Summary- MDNR applications – all funding and ROW commitments must be provided by October 1.

Railroad indicated willingness to grant ROW access at Hudson. MDOT request to change route east of S Hudson due to a section of the trail being in a flood plain.

Austin gave an overview of the proposed route. Dave provided an overview of the current project funding standings including information about the reduction of the project cost of over \$1M dollars compared to the original route that went through the city and the Moose property.

LARA's project is running into hurdles, the biggest is from MDOT. Austin provided a detailed 50-page response to their questions. MDOT is looking for a lot of details and requesting another change to the route due to part of the route being in a flood plain.

MDNR has asked about the section east of Jackson and if we can close the 1 mile gap to the trail. – this is an option -most likely would be done with a crushed asphalt base, similar to what is currently down on the trail that leads into Saranac.

Big hurdle: MDOT is now requiring a plan for when the trail floods and will not allow the proposed trail to go through a floodplain. MDOT has suggested to run along the shoulder of Bowes Rd. This option for the trail was already exhausted. The Board had already looked into this option, but had opposition from two property owners along Bowes Rd.

With this hurdle, Austin provided thoughts on options with pros and cons to move forward with the Phase 2 project. 1.- Use the shoulders on Bowes Rd. -the shoulders may not be wide enough & safety is an issue 2. Put the trail on the South side on the existing sidewalk. – property owners have expressed opposition and the MDNR may not fund this option. 3. Start on the south side, then cross the road at Stoney Lake Side park – still run into property owner opposition 3. Run the trail along the north side of Bowes Rd. – this option could still produce property owner opposition- plus there is no access to the parks without crossing the road – possibly causing issues with funding. 4. Drop MDOT grant, which means our major funding source and, for the moment, for-go the attempt to connect the entire 125 mile trail. Keep the trail completely local, which would eliminate the need for the bridge. There was discussion that assistance from other groups was greater a few years ago, but those people have moved away from the community and since then -putting the responsibility solely on the LARA board; not sure if the current MDNR application can be amended, or if an entirely new application would need to be submitted; this option provides no regional connection; this option doesn't address the years of work researching all options,

spending thousands of dollars; unsure if MDNR, or other funding sources would still be interested in a smaller project if we change gears.

The Board held discussions about how to approach to the trail changes that are required by MDOT. Strong opinions and Board consensus to move forward with current design. There was discussion about reaching out to State Representatives and get them on Board with the project to see the completion of the 125 mile trail system.

Every option has been discussed and carefully considered; member Anderson expressed frustration at the hurdles. Anderson expressed that this most recent MDOT hurdle needs to be resolved quickly. This project has been in the works for about ten years.

EXISTING TRAILS: UPDATES:

Mork shared screenshots of the flooding of the Little League property and the Cooper Woodland trail which is stemmed from the Maple Ridge manor transferrin their parcel's water to a neighboring parcel and it is now flooding the Cooper Woodland trail and the parcel that is currently owned by the Lowell Little League. – Tom Postema from Scenic Expressions has volunteered for years to mow the Cooper Woodland trail and showed the photos to Mork – he said that this area of water over the trail he estimates is about 4 foot deep. The water has never been there until construction started at the Manor. The actual ROW is under water for quite a distance. Board member Anderson informed the LARA Board that the developers are aware of the problem and were going to fix the water issue, but there are concerns that this should have been corrected by now since the project is nearing completion.

Flooding is still an issue -even with the newly constructed detention ponds in place. Board member Davidson will email the photos to Jerry Hale, Lowell Township Supervisor, and Mork will call Hale to discuss further.

Dumping water from one parcel to another parcel is considered illegal trespassing without an easement to do so.

LOVE WEEK- TRAIL CLEAN-UP – July 13 – 17th – Hoffman was in contact with Bob Rogers of Impact Church who is spearheading their LOVE WEEK. Bob and his crew of volunteers are on the schedule to provide the much-needed clean-up and cut-back of brush along the trails. Their group of volunteers has offered assistance in the past and have done a great job on the trails.

BENCH AND PLATFORM – Dave Austin will put eyes on what is needed along the trail to correct the bench with the sinking platform along Alden Nash.

Davidson motioned to adorn meeting at 7:19 pm.

Next Meeting: July 8, 2020 -Stoney Lakeside park tentative site.