

Lowell Area Trails Meeting
January 14, 2004
4:00 - 5:30 pm
Athletic Office Conference Room
Lowell High School

Present: Mari Stone, Perry Beachum, Dave Pasquale, Liz Baker, Alan Rumbaugh, Dan Edwards, Al Halbeisen, Barry Hobrla, Andy Linebaugh, and Betsy Davidson

Funding sources for startup

A grant application was prepared by Mari and Perry and submitted to the Lowell Area Community Fund on January 2, 2004. The application is for funds for startup costs for the authority. Unofficial word is that the application was well received. An official decision on the application is expected by February 10th.

There has been some activity in the donation account that has been set up at the City. Information on the account was published in the Lowell Ledger.

Mari Stone has talked to Mark Van Allsburg about starting work on setting up the authority in accordance with the Urban Cooperation Act of 1967 or a similar Act. The committee was in agreement that we should not wait until the February 10th grant decision to begin the process. There is money available in the temporary fund at the City, and a large donation from a local organization is still in the works. It was decided that we will ask Mark to prepare preliminary items to include in the agreement for discussion at our February 11th meeting.

Public Information

The group continued discussion of ideas for the Lowell Community Expo to be held at the high school in March.

Ideas included;

- Provide information on the development of the Recreation Authority
- Provide information on the donation account.
- Display maps of the potential trail system.
- Display of other trails that have been completed.
- Sign up list for a tour of Portland's trail system
- Sign up for "Adopt a Trail" groups to maintain sections after they are constructed
- Map out a "preliminary" route for the first phase segment from the Wittenbach Center to the Cooper Woodland.

Al H. obtained the high school site plan for use in preliminary discussion of routes from the Wittenbach Center to the southeast corner of the site. Routes might use existing pathways and utility easements. Coordination with cross country race routes will be needed. Barry reported that the cross country teams would utilize a paved trail network for training, but that meets would be held on unpaved terrain as much as possible.

It was decided that the focus at the Expo would not be on actual visits to the trail, rather a slide show or video presentation would be prepared to show people areas that the trail could go through or connect to and also show trails in other communities.

Funding for design and construction.

Dan has been gathering grant application forms and instructions. Some of the sources have lengthy and involved applications. The MDNR Recreation Grant application has an April 1 deadline. Andy Linebaugh provided copies of additional information on funding sources.

Due to the complexity of the applications, including the need to provide detailed cost estimates, maps and exhibits, discussion was held on the potential need to get professional help in preparing applications. Al commented that a firm, such as Landscape Architects and Planners, that deals with these applications frequently would have the experience to efficiently handle these. It is important that the applications that involve cost estimates for construction be accurate since most grants are fixed amounts and the granting agencies do not vary the award amount after selection. The application can be for a segment of a phased plan and the project limits can be negotiated in some cases to fit the funds available.

Dave suggested that a meeting with the Lowell Area Community Fund board may be beneficial in establishing a long term plan that would involve yearly funding requests.

Goals for the year

Determining the steps necessary to obtain funding for construction of the trails.

Discussion on the name of the group and trail

It was decided to keep the name "Lowell Area Recreation Authority" to keep options open for other recreation projects and to differentiate between the group and the trail. The Lowell Area Trails is a working title for the trail. The trail name may be changed for a significant donor.

Perry will contact the Lowell Area School Board to schedule a date to make a formal presentation to the Board.

The foregoing constitutes my understanding of matters discussed and conclusions reached. Please review and share your additions or corrections at our next group meeting on **Wednesday February 11, 2003 at 4 pm, Lowell High School**. LARA meeting dates will be on the second Wednesday of each month to avoid conflicts with the West Michigan Trails/Greenways Coalition meetings that are held on the third Wednesday.

Respectfully submitted,
Al Halbeisen, P.E.
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For more information refer to the website
www.lowellareatrailway.org