

Friends of the Columbia Greenway Rail Trail, Inc.
Meeting Minutes April 18, 2017
First Congregational Church 18 Broad Street Westfield MA

Meeting called to order by Secretary Chris Steger at 6:31PM.

Present: MJ Bull, Bob Burch, Dan Call, Joe Camilleri, Alice Flyte, George Hart, Bob Pac, Sandy Sorel, Chris Steger, and John Tassinari.

Guests: Eric Bressler, Bengt-Olaf Schneider, Carmel Steger, and Mike Young.

C. Steger called the roll, and with quorum the meeting began. There was a reading of the public notice, and a welcoming of guests to the meeting. MJ Bull as chair of the nominating committee noted the guests had been invited by the nominating committee to attend, as they are considering running for the Board at the May meeting.

Treasurer's Report: checking account balance is \$12,219.36 (submitted after meeting).

As there were only 2 Directors' Reports, there was no vote on the consent agenda.

A motion was made by MJ Bull to approve the minutes of March 21, 2017, with a second by B. Pac. This was amended to include approval subject to corrections to spelling of several names. **Amended motion passed unanimously.**

C. Steger explained that the Chair of the FOCGRT, Joe Giffune, is on a medical leave, and both the Vice Chair and Treasurer positions are to be filled at our next meeting. As such, the Secretary, C. Steger, presides over the meetings.

There were no reports of City Officers, and no Public Participation comments were offered.

Directors Reports

Planning and Development

Moving on to Directors' Reports, MJ Bull, Director of Planning and Development, reported she is trying to arrange a meeting with graphic designer George Ramirez to get a design for the proposed history board on Native American culture. There may in fact be two boards.

Maintenance

B. Pac, Co-Director of Maintenance, presented his Report noting the following: he attended an event in Simsbury and he corresponded with Casey of the Westfield DPW about the request from a business for a bike rack. There was a discussion about bike racks and downtown, with MJ Bull noting D. Podolski and J. Giffune had met with the relevant City officials to discuss locations, and approved ones that would serve all businesses and not block the sidewalk. D. Podolski has a map of these locations, and is waiting for a July grant deadline to apply for funding for the purchase of black squirrel insignia racks. Alice explained

that the Jayzz Café may have sought a bike rack, but it is closing so no longer needs one. B. Pac will follow up with D. Podolski and try to get the map of locations to the next meeting for review and discussion. C. Steger noted this item would be put on the May agenda, and suggested we can discuss if the FOCGRT should be providing bike racks at no cost, on request.

B. Pac informed the Board of other maintenance incidents from the past month including the removal of the Hedges Avenue sign from the base of the ramp to a location along the trail, and DPW's reinstallation of it in the appropriate location; trees down from storm events; glass on the trail swept-up (after notice to the Westfield Police Department); graffiti removed; handicapped parking space sign removed, reported, and replaced; and attempts to fix the doggy-bag hinges (still being worked on).

B. Pac also noted that he had participated with A. Flyte and C. Steger at the trail opening, and posted a photo to Facebook. A. Flyte reminded people to continue to post images and share in order to build up the Facebook presence. A major concern reported by B. Pac was vandalism over the line in Southwick, at the very attractive kiosk. The Plexiglas was removed and broken, and the wooden structure was set on fire. B. Pac noted there is good reason to be afraid of fire in this area, and he reported the damage to Southwick. The Southwick Police are investigating.

Education

J. Camilleri reported he had an excellent student lined up to complete a follow-up survey of Westfield residents' attitudes towards biking and the CGRT. The student will provide a longitudinal view from the survey of four years earlier, to see if there is more awareness and use of the facility, and awareness of biking in general.

B. Pac noted a new neighbor told him he had moved to the location due to the access to the FOCGRT. S. Sorel handed out a 2017 report from the National Association of Realtors titled, "Walkable Neighborhoods: Market Demand for Walkability, Linear Urban Parks, and Walking for Healthy Living." She noted she had sent copies to City Engineer Mark Cressotti who had forwarded them to the members of the City Council.

Membership

A. Flyte reported on her membership work including deleting the old Facebook members and again encouraged people to post on the new FB page. She noted she would be tabling at the Westfield Senior Center on Thursday April 20th from 10 – 2PM. She asked if anyone could come by to give her some relief.

A. Flyte outlined the Westfield Bike Week events including:

- May 13 – pedal in to get coffee – right now she is looking for a location to replace Jayzz Café.
- May 15th – Mayor's Ride 10 AM starting at City Hall.
- Tuesday May 16th our next meeting is a meet and greet event at Amelia Park., in the main meeting room. We will have an open community forum starting at 5:30 with

updates by the City Engineer, and general comments on the FOCGRT supporting activities. Our regular meeting will follow the Meet and Greet. C. Steger will MC the event.

- Wed May 17th Ride of Silence 7PM Starting at South Middle School.
- Sun May 21 D. Podolski is organizing a Vintage Velo rider – details to follow.

All these activities have been sent in to PVPC that is coordinating activities in the Valley, and there will be a flyer for them as well.

There was a discussion about where the FOCGRT should have regular meetings, as it was noted that the location has moved around and that can be confusing. C. Steger stated he would add it to next month's agenda so we can determine the right place for the fall – there were some comments about paying and not paying for space, too. S. Sorel noted Shaker Farms had offered space for free as well.

Resource Development

S. Sorel reported on the **Golf Tournament progress—the date is June 23rd**. She handed out brochures and encouraged people to use their networks to:

- Get foursomes,
- Get raffle prizes, and
- Get sponsors.
- **She asked all Board members to donate a six-pack of Craft beer for a Craft beer table raffle.**

Westfield Bank has signed on as the main sponsor with a key donation. She noted FOCGRT will be sharing some signs with the White Oak School which will have a tournament the day after FOCGRT. S. Sorel will need volunteers on the day of the tournament.

Other Items

S. Sorel related a problem with the mail box that made her work more complicated. The mail box fee was not paid so the USPS locked the box and returned all the mail – including at least one check from a donor. She contacted J. Giffune and it was resolved, but she noted she had no way of knowing what else may have been returned to people causing confusion and possibly the loss of sponsors or players.

There was some discussion about the need to have J. Giffune focus on his health and the Board to take on its full responsibilities for keeping things running. C. Steger will take a list of questions to J. Giffune with the goal of the Board assuming full responsibility – including having someone with the ability to write checks and make deposits to keep things running smoothly. S. Sorel suggested the Vice Chair position could be made explicitly responsible for some of these items. Other things mentioned by Board members that need review and Board oversight include:

- Is there a final set of bylaws and where is it archived? There are many different versions marked “Final” but they are different and do not reflect the minutes when the Bylaw changes were approved. There needs to be follow-up on this—including getting a true final clean copy of the

current bylaws, and submitting it to the state. Should there be a google drive account with relevant documents?

- A question was asked if the FOCGRT had submitted any needed tax forms? Do we have a lawyer/accountant? Was the prior work by an attorney that was approved, completed?
- A question was raised as to whether or not FOCGRT Board of Directors Insurance is up-to-date?

A group consisting of C. Steger and S. Sorel will move to resolve these outstanding questions.

New Business

D. Call reported on the progress of the final central section through the funding processes. He has been attending the Joint Transportation Planning Committee (JTTC) and the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) monthly meetings—both regional groups that work on rating, prioritizing, and making amendments for federal transportation funding. The central section is different as the prior ones were funded with Massachusetts Commonwealth funds through DCR. The funds for the central section will be federal transportation dollars, which are allocated in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and must be coordinated with MassDOT. This section is presently listed as getting funding in 2019.

The Westfield River bridge will be completed during 2017- 2018. The central section is estimated at 6.3 million dollars – it includes 5 bridges—and it is at 75% design. Final adjustments are being made to revisions that have to do with access points. The plan now includes three access points for the central section:

- Full access at Thomas Street,
- Full access at Elm/Franklin near Mobil Station, and
- Emergency Access only near the Court House/Maple Street.

VHB is working on the details for these access points, and the City is finalizing the right-of-way they may need to make these work.

A. Flyte noted the City has put out a draft Community Development Action Plan that includes reference to the Riverwalk/Esplanade project. Comments are welcomed and can be submitted to the City on-line.

A. Flyte suggested funds should be set aside to have restrooms at the esplanade area. There will be a public hearing on the proposed plan on April 27th in Room 315 t 6:30 PM at Westfield City Hall, 59 Court Street, Room 315, Westfield, MA . For more information see:

<http://www.cityofwestfield.org/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=586>

Respectfully submitted,

MJ Bull
(Filling in for C. Steger)