

**Friends of the Columbia Greenway  
Meeting of September 15, 2015  
Rinova Building**

Present: MJ Bull, Joe Camillieri, Alice Flyte, Joe Giffune (joined late after attending City meetings for the Friends), George Hart, Sally Memole, Bob Pac, Kate Phelon, Don Podolski, Jay Queenin, Sandy Sorel, Chris Stegr, John Tassinari.

Also present were two guests.

In the absence of Chair LaValley and (initially) Vice Chair Giffune, Secretary George Hart presided at the meeting.

**Call to Order:** George called the meeting to order at 6:30PM.

**Roll Call:** Roll call was completed and it was determined a quorum was present.

**Open Meeting Announcement:** George noted the FOCGRT meetings are open to the public and there was a time for the public to address the Board.

**Approval of Consent Items:**

➡ On a motion by Don, seconded by Joe C., the consent agenda was unanimously accepted.

**Report of City Officers:**

- a. In the absence of the City Engineer, discussion of Northside Trail Project was tabled.
- b. In the absence of Sgt. Eric Hall, report from the Community Police was tabled.

The Board discussed the idea of the FOCGRT establishing a Reward Fund to be utilized for information leading to apprehension of perpetrators of any acts of vandalism along the Columbia Greenway Rail Trail—an idea suggested to the Chair who forwarded for Board consideration.

The discussion touched on a variety of concerns. It was suggested that offering an award could lead to numerous nuisance calls, and that there are no witnesses to most of the vandalism that occurs at night. It was also stated that the Police do not regularly patrol the trail at night. Other issues were also raised about the difficulty of determining what is good information versus bad information, the complications of prosecution (from former DA Jay), and under what circumstances the reward would be given. The basic questions of who would be called, who would make the determination of the reward, and how the police felt about the idea were raised.

The Director of Maintenance, Bob Pac, noted that there is regular vandalism occurring and there appears to be little action being taken to control or prevent the graffiti and other damage. It is his belief that the vandalism reflects badly on Westfield, and it takes a lot of time to monitor the Trail and rectify the damage. The reward would be a first step to addressing the problem. Another would be to increase the police presence at night.

It was noted that good Samaritans would report without a reward. Also, people do not know who to report vandalism to. Alice noted Southwick includes a phone number on their trail signs. Bob said the City has a link on its webpage to report any concerns, but the community does not know about it. Joe C.

stated a larger plan was needed on how to police the trail and include a well thought out prevention strategy.

Don made a motion to table this issue until Sgt Hall could be present, and it was seconded by Sandy.

➡ Vote: all in favor, except for one NO vote, no abstentions.

### **Public Participation**

Steve Dondley candidate for City Council At Large seat said he appreciates the work of the Friends and believes the trail will be good for downtown Westfield. He noted our meeting was on his Facebook feed and it noted the public was welcome to attend. He said he is very much a proponent of the work of the Friends. He supports a bike lane on Western Avenue and believes Westfield needs to move into the future. He described a recent trip to Germany where bike lanes are integrated everywhere. He stated there is a need for new modes of transportation. His campaign literature was distributed.

John noted there the FOCGRT are concerned with the completion of the project under a new administration. Don asked if Dondley had seen the Bikeability assessment done by MassBike and the FOCGRT, and he said no.

➡ A copy of the Bikeability Assessment should be sent to Steve Dondley.

The second public attendee was Sebastian Glebocki who does metal working around town. He said his work looks to local history and incorporates recycled materials in order to reflect New England. He makes gates, sculptures, and more, and came at the suggestion of the Chair to learn more about the Friends ([www.sebastianandsonsmetalworks.com/](http://www.sebastianandsonsmetalworks.com/)).

### **Reports of Directors**

#### **a. Director of Events**

Sally distributed a draft form and poster for the photo contest and asked for feedback. The location of the event is still to be determined—it may be at Rinova or the library. It will be advertised through Facebook and downtown businesses. There was discussion around the make-up of the judging panel, including discussion about reaching out to elementary school art teachers, independent artists, and how large the group should be. It was agreed a panel of three with an art teacher, independent artist, and photographer from the Westfield News would be a good approach. Other thoughts were offered around getting the word out including getting approval through the School Superintendent's office to distribute through the schools. It was also noted that the Westfield Academy (Former Tech) can make the copies and bundle them for the schools and perhaps make cookies as refreshments. George suggested using the complete formal name: Columbia Greenway Rail Trail on the materials and it was also suggested some images be inserted. The final version should go up on Facebook and be forwarded to John for the web page. The date of the event was changed from Oct 11<sup>th</sup> to Oct 24<sup>th</sup>.

#### **b. Moon walk**

An idea of a Fall Full Moon Walk along the trail, with light refreshments by the Friends was put forth by the Chair (in absentia). Discussion focused on – how do we get permission from the City? Would we need a police presence? And the dates were reviewed with Sept 27<sup>th</sup> being too soon to organize and the October date conflicting with the WOW Cemetery Ghost Walk. November seemed iffy in terms of weather, so it was recommended the idea be tabled and re-engaged with the Chair for dates in the spring. George noted he believes such events are very important for the Friends to do – interacting with

the public by providing recreational opportunities not just asking for money. Other walk ideas were also offered, including Don recommending a Moonlight Pajama Bike Ride and Alice a Costumed Dog Parade.

c. Spring Third Party Fundraiser Idea

Don makes the motion for Demetrios Kanavaros to request 2016 date(s) during May/Bike month, second by Joe C.. During discussion the question was raised about the need to support other businesses that also offer these promotions. Other possible restaurants raised by Board members included - Bertucci's, On the Border, and Applebees. Sally noted the Board had not been involved in the last decision, although it was a low risk venture that ended up well with \$500 being raised.

Jay suggested Demetrios do research on all the possibilities and bring that to the Board for the next meeting. With a range of choices the Board can decide the best option. It was noted the Board could do more than one such event to spread it around to local businesses. Motion by Jay that research on all the choices be completed and brought to the next Board meeting, second by Joe.

➡ Vote: All in favor none opposed, or abstained.

a. Golf Committee Report

Sandy distributed a summary of the Golf Tournament figures, including a profit of \$6,827.43. She noted the event was very successful with no complaints--except for the comment there was too much food! Everyone had a good time, including 5 women teams, 5 mixed teams, and 9 men teams, for a total of 78 golfers. There is still the potential to raise \$400 by selling a remaining 40 ball markers at \$10 apiece. There were no hole-in-one winners but the raffle went smoothly with this year each purchase getting a sheet with one number. The date of August 20<sup>th</sup> has been set for next year. Don asked how the figure compared to last year's. Sandy noted this year's event spent less but had fewer teams and less Green signs, so the amount is a little below. Some sponsors did not use their foursomes so the FOCGRT gave them to the Police and others.

b. Bylaw Review Committee Report

Alice reported that Jeff, George, and Alice met and are halfway through the bylaws. They will come to the Board with changes for the next meeting. Some of the changes they are looking at are the renaming of committees and adding the immediate past chair as a voting member. They anticipate sending the proposed changes to the Board for review prior to the October meeting, where they would be discussed. The November meeting would be a vote for approval, with ratification at the December meeting and the changes taking effect for January 2016.

c. Awards Committee

Kate reported that the FOCGRT Award decisions had been made but are not being revealed yet. There are two Categories -- the Albert Pope and Trail Blazer Awards. A motion was made by Don to approve the purchase of 2 recognition plaques @ \$48.00 (plus additional setup charges) for an estimated total not to exceed \$150, second by Jay. During discussion the Board considered when to give out the awards and agreed the October 2 Fenton Community Breakfast Workshop at the WSU Woodward Center would be a good time. Don amended the motion to include this, Sandy seconded.

➡ Vote: Motion passed unanimously; no abstentions.

## **Old Business**

### 1. Fenton Event

MJ reported that the Fenton event is scheduled for a public evening talk on Thursday October 1, 2016 at Scanlon Hall at WSU and is open to the public. Friday October 2, there will be a Community Workshop from 7:30 – 10 AM. Board members should spread the word, and come!

### 2. MOU

The MOU was referred to the L and O committee. It is anticipated the interpretive historic signs will be completed at the end of the month with ribbon cutting mid-October to open the new section. Don noted the final coat of asphalt through the Stop and Shop section should be completed within 2 weeks and fencing started today.

### 3. Memorial Bricks

John Tassinari provided an update noting that there has not been much progress since the last meeting. The bricks would be installed in the spring as part of the levee project. John sent around a brick engraved by Laurie Fey. The cost of this would be \$12/brick. What remains to be determined is the costing of the bricks. This is related to cost estimates from the landscaper working for the City, and the question of whether or not the Friends are paying for installation. Board members noted other such projects have charged \$100 - \$125, the FOCGRT would have to set a figure after the costs from the landscaper are obtained. John noted a pdf form on-line has been set-up, although it would be good to get a more professional system for collecting payments on-line. There was a question about the degree of support the Board has for the project. Bob said he felt the idea was very classy and contributed to the community. Others expressed agreement that it is a great idea all around and a relatively easy fundraiser. Only down side is the potential for vandalism, and the question was raised if the Friends would replace vandalized ones? It was suggested this should be less of a problem given how well-lit and used the area is. John will reach out to Mark Cressotti in order to get landscaper figures.

### 4. Chamber Round Tables

Kate said the idea of a Chamber and Friends co-sponsored event on Bike and Pedestrian Friendly Business Practices came from a Summit she, Don and Jeff had attended. The idea is to invite people and educate the business owners on how to become bike friendly and to hear about the economic potential of the trail. Kate suggested the FOCGRT slide presentation would be good, plus having the participants go through a checklist of items that make your community bike friendly. The event would include City Councilors, Community Police, and more. The Chamber would handle the invitations, the question is when do we want to have it? Don suggested sooner was better. A motion was made by Don to create a subcommittee with Don, Joe G., Sally, and Kate to plan the event, second by Kate. Don noted he could invite the Director of MassBikes to come too, and they have economic data.

➡ Vote: Creation of subcommittee approved, unanimous vote, no abstentions.

## **New Business**

### 1. Maintenance Issues

These were unclear to those present so tabled for future meeting.

### 2. Naming Opportunities.

Joe G. noted he did not have the brochure with him so this item was tabled for the next meeting.

### 3. Donation of Bike Racks

Dan Kotowitz has 6-8 bike racks to be donated. Questions were raised as to what the racks looked like and how easily they can be installed? It was stated Dan's intent was to have them presented to businesses in exchange for a donation to the Friends. A motion was made by Don, second by Joe G. for Dan to be invited to the next Board meeting to share pictures and specifics on the racks.

➡ Vote: Motion approved unanimously, no abstentions.

### Community Reports

No one present to report.

### Announcement: Next meeting Oct 20<sup>th</sup>

Joe Giffune requested time to return to the Vice Chair Report. Joe noted we had received \$5K from People's Bank and \$2,500 from the Cultural Council toward the sign production. He asked MJ to get an Invoice from W/S Design. He also reported that this evening (why he was late) the L and O committee approved the MOU and sent it to the City Council who should vote this Thursday night, which will then free up the exchange of the signs and all other "gifts" to the City from the FOCGRT.

### New items

Joe Camilleri noted that during the last election cycle, the FOCGRT asked all candidates to respond to a set of relevant questions. Their responses were then posted on the website and Facebook.

Joe would like to see this happen again. Sandy noted FOCGRT could also submit questions for the debate and call in to WSBK when the Mayoral candidates are interviewed. Motion for Joe C. to review the past questions update them and send to the candidates. This may take an Executive Committee meeting to approve the final questions in order to get them out in a timely manner. MJ said it is good to remind ourselves, we do not endorse candidates; we are only distributing positions statements on issues we care about for people to decide.

➡ Vote: Motion approved unanimously, no abstentions.

Don announced that next Thursday the 24<sup>th</sup> there will be a Bike Walk Summit in Worcester, put on by the East Coast Greenway Alliance. He noted the workshops looked good. The registration fee is \$ 75 and the day runs 8.30am – 5pm. Motion by MJ, second by Chris, for up to three people to be reimbursed for registration.

➡ Vote: Motion approved unanimously, no abstentions.

Meeting Adjourned at 8:30PM.