

MINUTES St. Croix Bike Pedestrian Trail Coalition - March 11, 2015 - 6:30 p.m.
City of New Richmond Civic Center, 156 East First Street, New Richmond, WI

CALL TO ORDER – David Mandel, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at ~ 6:35 p.m.

STATEMENT OF PUBLIC NOTICE – Mandel indicated that the agenda had been posted at the Town of Somerset Town Hall and on the Coalition web site.

ROLL CALL – Coalition board members present were Susan Heuser, Andrew Lamers, David Mandel, Mark Vanasse and Timothy Witzmann. Coalition board members absent were Richard Baillargeon, Mark Gherty, Andre Johnson and Marian Webber. St. Croix County Supervisors present were Jill Berke, Dan Hansen and Agnes Ring. Bob Heise, Resource Management Administrator for St. Croix County, and approximately 30 – 35 other people were also present – some representatives or employees of various governmental bodies, others interested persons. Susan Overson was present as the speaker for the evening.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA – A **motion** (Witzmann, Vanasse) to adopt the agenda as presented. **Carried**

PUBLIC COMMENT – Opportunity for comments on subjects not on the agenda when recognized by the presiding officer. There was no public comment.

APPROVAL OF PRIOR MEETING MINUTES – January 14, 2015 – A **motion** (Vanasse, Witzmann) to approve the January 14, 2015, minutes as presented. **Carried.**

REPORTS - from subcommittees and/or individuals about information gathered for the coalition

Nonprofit Filing – Vanasse reported that the Coalition had received notification from the IRS that it was granted tax exempt / nonprofit status on February 26, 2015.

Financial Report – Vanasse reported a modest goal for funds in 2015, initially to pay for legal and filing fees. Later in the year a small fund raiser is being considered to meet ongoing expenses.

Hwy 35 Bridge Resolution – Heuser reported that 8 communities in addition to the Coalition have passed a resolution requesting that WisDOT find a method for moving Loop Trail traffic from the southern end of the trail as it crosses Hwy 35 south toward Willow River State Park, the Village of North Hudson, the City Hudson and the I94 Bridge. Those resolutions are in the hands of WisDOT staff as final Loop Trail design begins in 2015. Hansen reported details St. Croix County committees had garnered about the process and also that the county had passed a similar resolution requesting consideration by WisDOT to move Loop Trail traffic south along Hwy 35.

Joint meeting between Towns of Somerset and St. Joseph – Vanasse and Mandel reported on plans for the Park Committees of the Towns of Somerset and St. Joseph to meet on April 15th to begin discussions about where and how to connect trails between the two communities.

Online registrations capabilities – Heuser indicated a new opportunity to register as a member of the Coalition is on the web site.

Hudson Hot Air Balloon Affair Booth – Witzmann reported a tremendous amount of interest in the information table the Coalition manned at the Hot Air Affair. Approximately 40 new people signed up to receive messages from the Coalition.

TAP grant and bicycle survey – Heise reported St. Croix County now has a signed State Municipal Agreement and that county staff is in discussions with WisDOT staff regarding the next agreement that needs to be in place before costs can be incurred with the TAP grant funding. In addition, review of the draft of the county wide bicycle survey is underway by county staff. Heise is optimistic that there will be more information about both topics in the near future.

Others that may be available – There were no other reports.

ITEMS for discussion and/or action

1. Outreach Opportunities – This item was not discussed.

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**PRESENTATION by Susan Overson, National Park Service
How Communities and Various Agencies & Organizations
Work Together Toward an Interconnected Trail System
Details of a Successful Model**

Overson opened her discussion about working with communities toward a common goal with some large overview recommendations – namely, passion and persistence are needed; outreach to new partners should be on going; the work will unfold over time; nothing happens overnight; and taking time to recognize the work that’s been accomplished is important. She reiterated several times during the presentation how proud she was of the local communities she has worked with because that is where the work has been done along the Mississippi River corridor and it will be likewise in St. Croix County.

Overson provided some detail regarding how the National Park Service’s Metro Mississippi Trails and Open Space Partnership got its start almost 20 years ago. Over the ensuing years the organization has grown to over 50 agencies and organizations and 25 communities along the 72 mile stretch of the Mississippi River that runs from the Crow River in Dayton/Ramsey all the way south of Hastings to the Goodhue County line. She indicated there was already a lot of infrastructure in place and a vision, now almost 100 years old, held by Horace Cleveland and Theodore Wirth to create parks and greenways along the river corridor. The project built on that firm basis. She suggested that the scenic river designation for the St. Croix River lends itself to that same kind of planning and collaboration. Similarly, working with the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, a National Park Service division, toward common goals could be an effective tool for St. Croix County.

Overson also detailed a shift in her organization’s emphasis in 2010 to multi-modal alternative transportation options along the river which allowed eligibility for federal transportation dollars to flow in as grant moneys that could be passed through to local communities. One of the programs highlighted was a bike share program that allows people to rent a bike to ride between destinations along the river corridor then leave it at a different destination to access other forms of transportation to move around the river corridor or into the cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul.

A summary of the process that evolved for Overson’s group follows.

1. Develop a plan and inventory existing infrastructure
2. Identify the gaps in the existing inventory – those can be good places to start
3. Develop prioritization criteria – everyone understands the value to their project and can wait for their turn
4. Track changes over time and identify interim routes while preferred routes develop
5. Create information for users and update that information regularly

Over the years, Overson has found reasons why working together works well as follows.

1. Achieves mutual goals
2. Maximizes funds; funding strategies are more successful
3. Creates new partnerships and, therefore, mutual support during the grant application process
4. Focuses on the bigger picture while implementing local goals
5. Provides numerous success stories

While acknowledging there are clearly challenges to these types of projects involving multiple partners and jurisdictions, Overson did recommend fostering a culture that listens to and considers all concerns.

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Finally some of the recommendations Overson offered for St. Croix County and its communities follow.

1. Cooperate with St. Croix County in its planning process
2. Be consistent with local plans – a requirement in the grant process
3. Use criteria to establish priorities
4. Be prepared and flexible as traditional and creative solutions present themselves
5. Be inclusive of all views
6. Promote health and economic benefits of trails
7. Update regularly and celebrate successes along the way

At the conclusion of her presentation, Overson answered questions from those in attendance and provided insight about topics including trails along power lines & on railroad beds, how to pay for trail maintenance, public/private partnerships, managing resistance, shifting priorities, winter use of trails and signage for same, and others. She concluded by advising those interested in trails to get involved in the process and to ride the trails.

6. Set next meeting date – May 13, 2015 – Mandel stated the next membership meeting would be on May 13, 2015.

ITEMS FOR NEXT COALITION AGENDA – Outreach Opportunities, Status of St. Croix County Initiatives, Joint Meeting Between Towns of Somerset and St. Joseph

ADJOURNMENT – A **motion** (Vanasse, Lamers) to adjourn. **Carried** at ~ 7:55 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Susan Heuiser, Secretary