

MINUTES St. Croix Bike Pedestrian Trail Coalition
City of New Richmond Civic Center, January 14, 2015, 6:30 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER – David Mandel, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at ~ 6:30 p.m.

STATEMENT OF PUBLIC NOTICE – Mandel stated that the meeting was posted by Jeri Koester, Town of Somerset Town Clerk/Treasurer, at the Somerset Town Hall. Mandel also noted the agenda was posted on the Coalition web site.

ROLL CALL - Trail Coalition Board of Directors present were Mark Gherty, Susan Heuser, Andre Johnson, Andrew Lamers, Dave Mandel, Mark Vanasse, and Tim Witzmann. Board members not in attendance were Rich Baillargeon and Marian Webber. Also in attendance were 30 - 40 people throughout the evening - some from various organizations and some interested individuals. Beth Norquist and Karen Blodgett from Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources were present as speakers.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA – A **motion** (Witzman, Lamers) to adopt the agenda, moving Item2 under *ITEMS for discussion and/or action* for consideration before Item 1. **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 – November 12, 2014 – A **motion** (Witzmann, Mandel) to approve the November 12, 2014, Coalition minutes as presented. **Carried.**

REPORTS - from subcommittees and/or individuals about information gathered for the coalition
Art Bench Project – Vanasse reported that the Coalition will raise between \$6,000 and \$7,000 over the next several years for an art bench that will be created by Houlton Elementary School students for placement on the Loop Trail that will be constructed as a part of the St. Croix River Crossing project in 2017. Work with students will begin in 2016. This project is part of a larger project through the Phipps Center for the Arts that has placed benches in various communities and parks along the St. Croix River.

Corporate Filings – Vanasse reported the corporate documents have been filed with the state of Wisconsin and that the nonprofit filing would likely occur in the spring. A change in emphasis in the by-laws has been proposed by the attorneys consulted about the business filings and Vanasse invited all interested persons to the February 11, 2015, Board of Directors meeting to hear the exact nature of the changes during a discussion with the attorneys.

Hwy 64 Trail Possibilities – This item was not discussed.

Loop Trail Access to Hwy 35 Bridge – Gherty discussed various actions taken by the Coalition, its members and others to raise awareness of the desire to get the Loop Trail traffic moving south toward the Village of North Hudson and City of Hudson in order to connect the Hwy 64 bridge the I-94 bridge ultimately connecting trail traffic from Hudson to Stillwater.

Speakers for Coalition Meetings – Heuser detailed the list of speakers at future coalition meetings.

Increased Board of Director Numbers – Mandel indicated there was a ninth member added to the Board of Directors and introduced Andre Johnson to the attendees.

Hudson Hot Air Balloon Outreach Possibility – Jill Berke discussed the possibility of a Coalition outreach/informational booth at the Hot Air Balloon Affair in the City of Hudson. Berke will discuss details of Coalition participation at the February 8th event held at E.P. Rock School with Witzmann.

St. Croix County TAP Grant and Survey Update – Bob Heise, St. Croix County Resource Management Administrator, reported the County is still waiting for approval to spend money through the TAP grant and, until that approval is received, no work can go forward. In addition, the bicycling survey is working through the process with electronic surveys to go out through the schools within the next week or so. No results are available yet.

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Others that may be available – Agnes Ring, County Board Supervisor, noted that the county is having 4 properties appraised in the consideration process for future acquisition using River Crossing mitigation moneys and one of those properties is along Hwy 35 south of the intersection with the new Hwy 64.

ITEMS for discussion and/or action

2. Membership in the Coalition – Vanasse announced a campaign to increase membership in the Coalition to raise awareness of trail issues throughout St. Croix County. More details are likely before the March 11th Coalition meeting.
1. Report from Events Committee about Possible Event(s) Sponsorship – A **motion** (Witzmann, Johnson) to approve the recommendations of the events committee. Johnson led the discussion regarding the Event Committee conclusions indicating that the committee felt the Coalition is not ready with the personnel and expertise to host a ride at this time. In addition, the committee did not feel that hosting a ride at this time was in line with the Coalition mission with the exception of an informational, group-led ride that highlights the river crossing and future Coalition plans. There was discussion, however, about assisting another organization with event/ride details. General consensus in further discussion concurred with the committee recommendations. Mandel called for a vote and the motion **carried with not opposition**. Heuser will communicate the Coalition decision to the City of Hudson RiverFest organization.

Presentation by Speakers

Beth Norquist and Karen Blodgett, WisDNR,
Will Discuss DNR Recreational Grant Opportunities

Norquist, a Local Unit of Government (LUG) grant specialist, and Blodgett, a Non-Profit Conservation Organization (NCO) grant specialist, provided details regarding the grant process for those separate programs through the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship program administered by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. (WisDNR). The things the programs have in common are at the core of the Knowles-Nelson program, specifically to preserve land and water resources; to provide recreational facilities needed for nature based, passive outdoor recreation; and to foster partnerships. Grants are awarded in the areas of land acquisition and development of recreational sites – currently ~\$6 million / year state wide for LUG grants and ~\$12 / year statewide for NCO grants. They indicated a grant application amount range between ~\$7000 up to \$1 million. Norquist indicated the LUG requests are quite competitive each year with more applications than grant money available while Blodgett's NCO program is less competitive.

Both ladies provided details about the grant application process, discussed the lengthy number of questions that needed thoughtful consideration by the applicants, indicated that those questions are based on Wisconsin statute regulations, encouraged applicants to begin discussions with them as early as possible in the application process, and followed with a description of what occurs in the award considerations used within WisDNR to decide funding grants statewide. Deadlines differ within each program and awards are announced after a number of months of process in the system.

Some important points emphasized during the presentation and in response to questions follow.

- Any grant application project must be a part of a master plan.
- There are strings attached to this grant money and applicants need to understand those requirements, chief among them that whatever action is funded will be in perpetuity, that whatever is funded will be accessible to all and that land protected under these programs has some passive, nature based activities that must be allowed.

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- There no planning grants through this program. Rather Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) awards those types of grants.
- Any trail funding would presume that conservation of the land is not affected and would require off road trails – at least four feet separating road pavement from the trail.
- These grants do not improve roads.
- These grants require a 50% match from the applicant. That match, however, can be in various forms, e.g. in kind donations of land, materials, work, etc. rather than money.

Some things communities and organizations can do to prepare for applications under these programs follow.

- Get the proper planning documents in place.
- Look for matching funding sources, i.e. area businesses and foundations. The matching funds cannot come from another state grant program, however.
- Work with area landowners. There are large tax benefits for land donations.

The presentation ended with pictures of a number of projects funded under these programs which included trails – one the Dough Boy Trail in New Richmond, bridges, park and farmer’s market pavilions, fishing piers, restroom facilities, etc.

3. Set next meeting date – March 11, 2015 – Mandel indicated that the next Coalition meeting will be held on March 11th.

ITEMS FOR NEXT COALITION AGENDA – Updates on corporate filings, events (e.g. Hot Air Balloon Affair), TAP Grant and Survey, Hwy 64 Trail Possibilities

ADJOURNMENT – A **motion** (Gherty, Witzmann) to adjourn. **Carried** at ~ 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Susan Heuser, Secretary