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Rail trail vote postponed

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LYNNFIELD - The committee working to bring a rail trail to Lynnfield and Wakefield has announced that it will not go before Town Meeting voters this April because the winter weather has delayed the expected results of an engineering study.

Committee chair Janet Long said that a report was expected back in December from WorldTech Engineering, the firm tasked with looking at ways to build the 4.4 mile trail along the flood-prone old railbed running through Reedy Meadow. Instead, the report is now expected closer to summertime, and Long said that the committee wanted to give residents a chance to review the information. She added that the decision to delay the rail trail vote was not related in any way to opposition the proposal has received from surrounding property owners who are raising concerns about safety, costs, and other factors regarding the trail. She also added that she believes the trail still has support from a majority of the town's residents.

"We need the residents to see the report," said Long, adding that the rail trail question will not necessarily be expected at the October Town Meeting either, depending on when the engineering report comes available.

"Once received, this and subsequent engineering reports in this multi-year, multi-step process will be presented to residents for a full discussion and modifications will be made based upon that input," said the rail trail committee in a separate announcement. The committee also indicated it had met with Town Administrator Jim Boudreau and counterparts in Wakefield to discuss next steps.

The specific question that would have gone before Town Meeting in April would have asked voters to accept a 99-year lease for the railbed land from the MBTA.

The proposed rail trail would run on tracks from downtown Wakefield under Route 128 into Lynnfield and Reedy Meadow before moving past the high school and middle school toward the Peabody line, where other area rail trails can be accessed.