**MEETING MINUTES**

**Ashburnham Rail Trail Committee**

**Thursday, March 1, 2018**

**Lower Meeting Room @ 6:30 PM**

**Town Hall**

In attendance: Rosemarie Meissner, Cec Snow, Chris Picone, Jessica Caouette

Guests: Bill Johnson, Chelsea Carey, Cathryn Bebeau-Smith

1. Call to Order
2. Approved the Minutes for Feb 2018 & Dec 2017. (We did not meet in Jan).
3. Old Business
   1. Signs and Trail Markers  
      Costs were reported in Feb 1 minutes; not yet paid.
   2. 101 TIP updates  
      We got a schematic from Weston and Sampson for the section along 101.  
      BJ has requested that the RT be part of the engineering plans for 101. The current engineering could cost the Town ca $300,000 for a $5 million project in return. It is seed money. But that probably does not include the RT. It would only include the part adjoining 101 in those plans now.   
        
      Our pitch to DoT is that the RT can replace the need for some of the sidewalks on the redone 101.  
      We should find out within 60 days if the RT is included.  
        
      If we have a “Rail Trail,” the Town only pays design fees, and the state pays the rest.  
      If we have “Greenway,” the building cost is less but the Town pays for it all. Economic development does not seem to come from “walking trails.” Rail trails seem to bring the development.  
        
      So we are shooting high now for the state Rail Trail, and would revert to the Greenway if that effort fails. Then we would have to get onto the Capital Plan. Right now we are not in the game at all.  
        
      To get started we need to present a plan to DoT showing the whole picture, so they do not just see a “trail to nowhere.”  
        
      RM has been talking with Jeff the Conservation Agent of Gardner, who is interested in connecting to Ashburnham.
   3. Not for Profit Status  
      We finally have non-profit status from the IRS. Now we can look at grants that only go to non-profits. We also have a bank account at Athol Savings Bank.  
        
      Possible fundraising in planning with EDC.   
      e.g., Witches Ride. Charge riders to dress like witches and throw candy as they ride. They get a beer and t-shirt. Paired with Beer tent as done with the 250th anniversary party. Scare-crows may still be up if we time it right.
4. New Business for Discussion
5. Trail Improvement and spring work days  
   Same as last meeting. Too early in spring to set dates.
6. Walking/Hiking Group with Library  
   Still in discussion with Library. They are still looking for groups to lead walks.
7. Items from the floor
8. Next Meeting- April 5, 2018
9. Adjourned