

SUNRISE TRAIL COALITION, INC. BOARD OF DIRECTORS' MEETING
July 24, 2018 @ 1 PM, Assembly Room Washington County Community College
One College Drive Calais, ME 04619

MINUTES

Members Present: Carol Cuddy, Bill Ceckler, Steve Rees, Crystal Hitchings, Charlie Corliss

Public Present: Keith Ramos, Moosehorn Wildlife Refuge; Brad Phillips, Sunrise Snowmobiles/City of Calais; Arthur Mingo, Calais City Council; Jim Porter, Calais City Manager; Billy Howard, Calais Mayor; Julie Jordan, Downeast Economic Development; Marianne Moore, St. Croix Valley Chamber; Joyce Maker, State Senator; Thomas Robb; Scott Lund; and members of the Calais ATV club: Tom Lann, Neal Bohanon, Dexter Farley, Mike Baker, Mark Hall, Bill Bowman, and Bill Lee (president)

GENERAL PUBLIC DISCUSSION: Trail Extension from Ayers Junction to City of Calais

Steve Rees opened the meeting with a welcome to the public and summary of the Downeast Sunrise Trail Coalition mission, structure, and history of work with developing, managing, and promoting the Downeast Sunrise Trail for outdoor recreation and economic growth. Steve explained the Trail's role as the longest off-road section of the East Coast Greenway bicycle route, and of international efforts to link trails across the US/Canada border in Calais.

Steve spoke briefly on the legislative ruling that created the trail, then Charlie Corliss presented slides showing the existing Pedestrian/Bicycle Route of East Coast Greenway through the Moosehorn Refuge, rail lines, and the recently completed ATV and Snowmobile Trails to downtown Calais. Charlie noted that the existing trail is on private land and could be shut down at any time, and that it is 26 miles from Ayers to St. Croix Junction rather than the 12-mile length of the rail bed route.

Steve then opened the meeting to a general discussion from the audience around the City of Calais' pending submission of a Citizens/Businesses Petition to be filed with Maine Legislature requesting multi-purpose trail construction from Ayers Junction to St. Croix Junction. The business community and regional club members have gathered 703 signatures and counting.

The Trail was originally built only to Ayers Junction due to Port of Eastport desiring connection and MDOT's desire to retain the rail for possible future use. Funds were appropriated for building the Ayers to St. Croix junction, but it is unclear where those funds are. Charlie explained that the MDOT has maintained the rail bed through the Moosehorn over the years so not as much rehabilitation would be needed if the rail were reused. A trail is not likely to be built beside the rail in this section, as it would be prohibitively expensive and the right-of-way is narrow.

Joyce Maker suggested that as political opposition may be strong, legislators should be engaged in the discussion early on. She explained the process of putting the petition into a Session, where it would then be assigned to a Committee, who would schedule a hearing to approve or disapprove the petition. If approved, it would be presented to the full legislature. Hearings would occur in February, a work session 1-2 weeks later, with 2 weeks of public comments.

Keith Ramos discussed potential concerns with keeping motorized vehicles on the Trail and off Refuge property, and opportunities to move snowmobilers off of Refuge property and onto the Sunrise Trail, thereby allowing more cross country skiing on Refuge property. Crossing Route 1 could be a challenge, as the Moosehorn owns the Right-of-Way and motorized vehicles may not be allowed to cross.

The group generally discussed the cost and potential of renovating the rail lines, the cost of building a new trail, and the fact that Calais is becoming a destination for ATVers. It would be helpful to have figures from hotels and from trail cameras regarding number of traveler coming to the area for ATVing. Aroostook County may have some information to share around ATV traveler economy.

Calais strongly supports ATV and Snowmobile club work, and would like to host an ATV related event, and to host more bicycle riders and equestrians in all their work. Bill Lee would like to take elderly residents on a

leaf tour (but the Trail needs a smooth surface first!) Many users of the Trail are walkers without other safe places to go. Robbinston, Calais, and Dennysville would like to develop the best trails around, and will work together to accomplish this goal. The St. Croix Club north of Calais should be included, and connections/collaborations on Trail extension could be explored with Baring, Baileyville, and Grand Lake Stream.

Crystal will ask Maine Tourism Association about their stance and role in lobbying for Trail extension, and get the Sunrise Trail Economic Study from HCPC to Jim and Brad at the City Hall, who will spearhead the effort with assistance from others.

PUBLIC DISCUSSION CLOSED

BOARD MEETING OPENED at 2:50

1. Trail Manager's Report – A contract for resurfacing the Schoodic Bog area feel through while waiting for turtle eggs to hatch. Sixteen active beaver sites are being worked on. A major slump occurred across the Trail in Columbia Falls. Maine Department of Conservation purchased supplies to replace center boards on bridges; Cathance Stream bridge decking is being fully replaced, and that work will be done by the Dennysville ATV Club. Grading was completed last month, but trail sections are already in rough shape – fine materials on many parts of the Trail are nearly gone, and grading aggravates the situation by kicking up rocks. Ayers Junction to Machias is in better shape, not as much Trail surface has been lost, perhaps due to more wooded areas keeping soils less dry and more intact.

2. Treasurer's Report-Treasurer, Gerry Nasberg – deferred, Gerry not present

3. Old Business

- Status of Annual Friend & Friend Fall Barbecue@ Cherryfield Cable Pool Park, Sept. 16.2018 - deferred
- Status of Promotion of ATV Raffle – Many tickets have been sold from Elmer's Discount in Columbia, and the ATV will be at the Milbridge Days parade. Maybe a side x side should be considered for next year's raffle. Charlie R will connect with Friend and Friend in Ellsworth about smaller raffle items.
- Crow Athletics All Night Relay Race July 20-21, 2018 (Ellsworth-Eastport) – Steve would like to encourage this event or similar events to include Calais.
- Status Newsletter completion for distribution to Members & Public – Carol updated the membership list. Membership list contains 163 people, but most have not paid in 2018. Business members should be reached out to, as they get free advertising on the website. Steve will complete 2017 and 2018 updates for the newsletter, which can be emailed to most members and a hard copy sent to those without emails listed. Newsletter and 2019 membership notice will be mailed in October.

4. New Business

Steve and Crystal met with Kristine Keeney, the new Eastern Region Coordinator for the East Coast Greenway. Kristine is excited to help the Coalition with their goals of improving the Trail surface. Frenchman's Bay Conservancy and ECG were good partners in the winter ski event, Bill Ceckler will engage the new FBC event coordinator.

Larry Johanasman of MaineDOT has agreed to help design a space for the public bike repair stand and new plantings for the Sally Jacobs Memorial in Machias. The Coalition would love to have a regular MDOT rep at Sunrise Trail meetings.

NEXT MEETING will be Tuesday, August 28th 12-2 in Ellsworth. Topics for next meeting: Recording meetings, guidance for grants and projects, and regional coordination.

ADJOURNED at 3:45pm.