

**Massachusetts Recreational Trails Advisory Committee**  
**MINUTES**  
**June 9, 2016**

**Location:** *Broad Meadow Brook Sanctuary, Worcester, MA*  
**Time:** *4pm to 6pm*

**Members Present:**

Dick O'Brien – Local/Community Trails and Greenways  
Becky Kalagher - Equestrian  
Bill Boles – Mountain Biking  
Benton Phelps – ATV's  
Larry Tucker - Snowmobiles  
Dick Williamson – Bikes/Rail Trails  
Tom Chamberland – Local Land Trust/Non-Profit Trails  
Mike White – 4-Wheel Drive Trucks  
Pam Browning – Paddling  
Amanda Lewis – DCR Liaison

**Meeting Minutes:**

**Welcome**

**RTP Updates**

Amanda informed the board that the 2016 RTP grant recommendations have been approved by the DCR Commissioner and the Governor. Letters will be sent out to all grant applicants informing them of the current status of their application. For those grants that were not recommended for funding, a letter informing them as such will be sent out. For those grants that have been recommended for funding, a letter will go out informing them of the grant's recommendation and subsequent review. Currently, all grants are undergoing NEPA and Section 106 review. Once those reviews are completed by FHWA and approved for compliance with all federal and state regulations, the grant will be awarded. At this time, letters have gone out to inform applicants of the fact that the projects have been recommended for funding but cannot be considered approved until FHWA has completed their review. Sending letters out now and at this stage of the process is meant to help potential grantees in their planning process.

Amanda also informed the group that the Mass Audubon educational grant, the "Trail Stewardship Training Series", has been contracted and they will be working on setting up an announcement and sign-up soon.

**Board Membership Updates and Discussion**

Currently, Dick Williamson is the only member whose term is ending this year, due to the re-structuring of MARTAB terms from 3 to 5 years. Dick will submit a nomination

form before the next meeting and the board will vote on membership from this user group at the next meeting.

Amanda pointed out that the no members have expressed interest in the position of Chair on the Board. She suggested that there possibly be co-chairs or no chair, depending on interest and needs of the board. The board agreed that, since there is no one interested in becoming chair and, since there is no major need for a chair on this board to represent MARTAB in official matters, no chair at this time is okay. Should someone be interested in the future, the board will reconsider this. Should the board feel compelled to write a letter or participate in another matter in an “official” capacity, the entire board or at least as many signatures as can be gathered will suffice in lieu of a letter from just the Chair. The discussion of Chair of MARTAB will be revisited and voted at next summer’s meeting, allowing a year to see if not having a chair works for the group.

Becky Kalagher asked that Sandy Wedge be removed as an alternate representing equestrian use. She will look for a new alternate.

Dick Williamson requested that DCR hold multiple events for the RTP Grant Award Ceremony, in different regions, so that all grantees can easily make an event and pick up their certificate of award. Amanda will look into this and inquire with DCR about multiple events.

*Follow Up: Amanda will send Dick Williamson a nomination form. This will be filled out and sent back to Amanda at least a week before the next MARTAB meeting. Amanda will remove Sandy Wedge from the MARTAB list. Amanda will work to set up multiple RTP award announcement events, if possible.*

### **New Grant Round Updates Discussion**

The Board discussed changes to the RTP grant application and review process. Several of these changes include adding and omitting instructions and wording on the application. The application will be updated and posted online by the end of June. The board discussed whether or not electronic applications were desirable among the reviewers. Since Amanda is required to submit several copies of the grant application as a hard copy to various reviewing agencies and since the majority of the board expressed that paper copies were preferable, the current requirement of submitting four hard copies of the application will stand. The topic will be revisited again at a later date. Amanda will investigate the possibility and work on submitting at least one copy electronically going forward.

### **2016 Trails Celebration Discussion**

The board discussed the October/November Trails Celebration proposed by Dick O’Brien and Amanda as an event to keep the trails community interacting during the conference “off year”. They solicited members for thoughts and comments on this idea, as well as possible outdoor venues where it might be held. The idea would be to get the trails community together for a celebration of trails, allowing an opportunity to share experiences, discuss challenges and accomplishments and have a good time outside

together. Some ideas include having several different trail outings scheduled by the different trail user groups across the state – all located within walking distance at the location of the event. There could be tables provided for people to showcase their trail projects and discuss with others. Lunch would be provided as a focal point for gathering and networking. There may be one or two times during the day when the whole group gathers for discussions and/or a presentation, or not. Either way, the idea is for this to be an easy, fun and laid-back event to simply bring people together who are passionate about trails and want to keep the conversations going that began with the trails conference.

Tom Chamberland suggested the Old Sturbridge Inn which provides a pavilion and is in direct proximity to several different types of trails. This location will be investigated further as the character of the celebration takes shape.

Amanda quickly covered some other developments within the trail community that will have an impact on future events and MARTAB planning efforts. One is the interest in the trails community of updating Commonwealth Connections. There is currently a core group of trail leaders in Massachusetts who have begun working on the first steps to make this happen. Discussions are currently focused on how to get it off the ground, preferably using a combined source of funds that would include Recreational Trails Program funds. Reaching out to partners will be another first step in the process, after an initial course of action is agreed upon. The group is currently working on setting up a meeting with the Commissioner to discuss the update and possible ways to best partner with DCR as the lead agency on this. Funding for a contractor to coordinate all aspects of this effort is preferable. Once the pieces are in place, the group sees the Trails Celebration as an excellent opportunity to launch the effort and notify the trails community about it. Developing a statewide inventory of trails with eventual access to the public is also priority as the update to Commonwealth Connections gets underway. An inventory would be essential to developing a plan for enhancing, maintaining and advertising the Massachusetts trail network. Finally, the update to Commonwealth Connections is also seen as a starting point for the development of a new, centralized trails advocacy and development organization that would ideally be a 501(c)3 with the ability to access and utilize funds such as RTP to forward its vision and goals.

The trails community has also expressed interest in applying to host the 2019 International Trails Symposium. This would require coordination and participation by all major trails organizations in the Commonwealth and in New England as a whole. The first step is to review the application for hosting, which has just been distributed by American Trails. Then, contacting groups to sponsor and participate will follow.

**Meeting Adjourned**