



MASSACHUSETTS RECREATIONAL TRAILS ADVISORY BOARD

October 13, 2020

Conference Call

1:00 – 2:00pm

Members Present with Representation:

Tom Chamberland, Chair - Local Land Trust/Non-Profits

Bill Boles – Mountain Biking

Tim Craig – Youth Corps

Joe Geller – Rail Trail Users

Marianne Iarossi – Municipal Trail Planners

Becky Kalagher - Equestrian

Bridget Likely – Hiking

Aaron North – Hiking

Dick O'Brien – Community Trails and Greenways Groups

Larry Tucker – Snowmobiling

Mike White – 4-Wheel Drive Clubs

Dick Williamson – Bicycling/Rail Trails

Liaisons:

Amanda Lewis – DCR MassTrails

Libby Knott – DCR MassTrails

Meeting Minutes:

- I. Welcome
- II. Conflict of Interest
 - Language Adoption Vote
 - Members' Responsibilities, Next Steps
- III. MassTrails Update
 - 2020 Grants
- IV. Education Grants
 - Process
 - Timeline
 - Chainsaw Safety Workshop proposed
- V. Other Business

Welcome

- Approve Minutes from June 9, 2020 meeting
Tom asked for a motion which was made by Mike and seconded by Bill. June 9, 2020 meeting minutes were then unanimously approved by attending members.

Conflict of Interest (COI)

- Tom began the conversation by outlining that today's meeting would cover discussion of, and subsequent voting to adopt, of the proposed Conflict of Interest language and policy. Focus was on the wording, the implications of each level of potential conflict that was outlined, and whether or not it will suit MARTAB's purposes towards transparency, fairness, and agreement when performing the board's duties, especially but not limited to the annual review of grants.
- A motion to adopt the COI language "as is" was made by Larry and seconded by Becky. A vote was held and all members present voted unanimously to adopt the language as submitted.
- Next steps were outlined regarding an individual's questions or comments as they pertain to either the group or to themselves. If anyone has a question, concern, or comment they were instructed to reach out to the board chair, Tom, to discuss. If necessary, Amanda and/or Libby can be asked to weigh in on any particular matter brought to Tom.
- Tom concluded by saying that the next grant round will be a test as to the policy's effectiveness; we will see how it goes. Before then, however, please carefully review the policy as to how it affects you as a MARTAB member. Try to identify any conflicts you may have and then get in touch with Tom, Amanda, and/or Libby to discuss the proper steps in addressing the conflict and clarifying its level of potential impact.

MassTrails Update

- Amanda reported on the 2019 grants. Most state funded are already contracted or in the final stages of contract initiation.
- The federally funded, RTP grants were awaiting finalization through FHWA. We just made the October 1 deadline and all contract documents have been distributed to grantees at this point.
- The 2020 grant round Request for Response (RFR) is posted on CommBuys with a November 1 start date. We will most likely start our marketing push on November 2 given that November 1 is a Sunday.
- The most recent proposed updates have been integrated into the application. Likewise, updates to the overall program management flow have been made and will be posted to the MassTrails website soon.
- Tom inquired whether there will be any impact on funding this year given the pandemic. To date, we do not have any other information other than on the state side we have been told to expect level funding. There has been no indication on the federal side that there will be any change. Amanda believes that the idea on the government side is to keep money flowing in order to keep the economy moving.
- Dick O'Brien noted that the Land and Conservation Fund is fully funded for the first time and was wondering if there was any information of how this may or may not bring more money into Massachusetts, especially regarding MassTrails. Amanda is not aware of any additional funds coming in from this but has a contact she can reach out to. If she finds out any information worth sharing, she will pass it along to the group.

Education Grants

- Tom had asked Amanda and Libby to outline a process for Education Grants in order to formalize the method by which these projects are granted. The topic arose out of a request to hold a chainsaw workshop this fall. The possibility of hosting a workshop that comes in on a "rolling basis" like this puts us at odds with the state's requirements that we post items and opportunities according to a competitive bid process. So, we unfortunately will have to pass on the chainsaw

workshop opportunity for now and try, going forward, to put together a regulated, managed educational funds grant cycle each year much like we do for the RTP grants.

- Amanda shared her thoughts about a process that is offset from the normal RTP grant review so that she and Libby can manage it effectively while simultaneously managing all of their other responsibilities. There are various pockets of time in the year that would allow for more time and attention to be given to these valuable projects.
- To begin, we will need to create an RFR to post on CommBuys so that the program meets the state's requirement of being a competitive process.
- We will need to create an application, review process, and timeline specific to the uniqueness of educational grants to ensure equal access, transparency, and fairness for all applicant. Otherwise we'll be out of compliance with the funding's guidelines on management of these projects.
- At first pass, Amanda believes that a May announcement/RFR posting with an August 1 application deadline will work well. That allows for an October 1 announcement and award that aligns with the federal government's fiscal year. Since education grants are one year, it makes sense to manage them along the federal fiscal year timeline.
- We will revisit this topic at our January 2021 meeting and begin the process for next year.
- As this topic relates to the MassTrails Conference, we might be able to tie the education grant and conference in to one RFR for ease of management and solicitation. Amanda and Libby will look into this to see if it makes sense and is allowed on the DCR end.

Other Business

June Meeting – Tabled Items

- Legislative Caucus – This topic was re-investigated. Tom pointed out that no legislative bodies are currently meeting in person due to the pandemic, but that we should somehow seek a way to keep the topic alive and be ready to actively move it forward in the new year. Dick O'Brien made a motion to put together an ad hoc, Legislative Caucus Subcommittee that can meet virtually for now with the goal of exploring outcomes of such a group and a process by which to invigorate interest in activating the Trails Caucus in the months to come. Motion was seconded by both Mike and Dick Williamson and was passed unanimously by all present. Volunteers include Dick O, Mike, Bridget, as well as potential others with trails-aligned interests. Dick O will pass the names and associations of any additional outside members of the subcommittee on to Amanda and Libby to keep them apprised of participants. The goal will be to hold 1-2 virtual meetings before our January MARTAB meeting, and present an update then.
- Review of Grant Projects for Compliance – Amanda opened by outlining the updates made to the grant process including to the application, grant agreement, project initiation form, guidelines, progress and close out reports, and equipment reporting. For ease of management by both grantees and the MassTrails team alike, these will now be online based forms for submission (versus a Word or PDF document to be downloaded, completed, and then sent in). We also endeavor to have a more robust process for closing out a project including a site visit when deemed appropriate (construction projects only) that takes place before a final reimbursement is issued. Dick O wanted to know what role MARTAB has or will have with projects when changes arise in scope that may alter the project's outcome from what was presented in the application (and hence approved of during the review). Amanda noted that typical changes are those made due to Section 106, MEPA, or NHESP findings during the required FHWA reviews. The shifts made are not major and truly enhance the project because they adhere to the requirements as laid out by FHWA. Amanda said that we can make MARTAB members aware of any major changes to

projects when appropriate. Dick O'Brien referred to a specific project in Erving where the specifications of the project were changed from building a fully accessible trail in the application to building a trail that is only partially accessible, and therefore cannot be classified as a fully accessible trail. Tom pointed out that the new process will document this more clearly so that this information can be shared easily going forward, and attested to this by mentioning that Sturbridge received a State-Funded grant this year and those grants are already following the new process, and it is quite organized and appears to track grant changes and progress more formally. Amanda explained that the Erving Project had encountered an issue under the federal review of Section 106 of the NHPA and this required the specifications for the trail to be altered, and to be built as accessible to the greatest extent possible. This falls under an exemption in FSTAG due to the required preservation of cultural resources. Amanda approved the changes accordingly. This was not a misstep, but Amanda acknowledged that a better process and documentation will allow for these changes to be tracked better and, when necessary, will work to inform MARTAB of any significant changes for specific cases.

Open Discussion

- Mike thanked Becky for the Cabot Cheese information she shared earlier this fall. His group was able to capitalize on the opportunity. Using the Cabot Cheese Reward Volunteers Program they were able create engagement for one of their volunteer events and then reward the volunteers for their time and effort with items from Cabot Creamery.

Upcoming Meeting Dates

Tuesday, January 12, 2021 – 1 to 3pm

Saturday, March 13, 2021 – 9am to 4pm (Annual Grant Review)

Tuesday, June 8, 2020 – 1 to 5pm (Annual Meeting and Field Trip)

Meeting Adjourned 2:00 pm