



Town of Falmouth – Ad hoc Connector Committee

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Memorandum

To: Falmouth Town Council

From: Community Park Connector Committee

Re: Trail Connection Update – Community Park and School Campus

Date: January 4, 2017

Project Description and CPCC Charge

The concept of the East Branch Recreation Trail between the School Campus and Community Park dates back to the late 1990's and the Community Park Connector Committee was charged in October of 2014 with the re-development of a vision and plan for a connection pathway, bridge(s) and/or tunnel between the Falmouth Schools Campus and Community Park. Their focus was on developing a trail connection to provide a safe, accessible and legal means to walk directly to and from the School Campus and Community Park.

Process and Progress

Following a presentation in November 2015 to the Town Council, the committee met with potential affected property owners (Miller) as well as requested a legal review of Conservation Easements by both Falmouth Land Trust Attorney and Town Attorney to determine "Right Title & Interest".

Town Attorney, David Kallin, presented his findings (**see additional attached document**). In short, both conservation easements present hurdles:

1. The Twin Ponds Subdivision Open Space parcel has restrictions "*that the land hereby conveyed shall remain in its natural state and shall not be developed or altered in any way. This Prohibition against any form of development shall include but not be limited to its use for parking, access to abutting properties, recreational uses other than existing walking trails.*" The easement further states "*clearing limitations*".
2. The Miller property covered by the McLaughlin Conservation Easement held by the Falmouth Land Trust, contains restrictions citing "*no structure of any kind, temporary or permanent, shall be constructed on the conservation land.*"

Following deliberation, the committee reviewed alternative options and is reporting to the Town Council "that the bridge crossing concept at the current location is no longer viable at this time...". The CPCC continued to meet and discuss alternative options utilizing existing infrastructure.

Jamie Mason, Town Engineer, presented two alternative routes utilizing existing right-of-ways:

Alternate #1 – Falmouth Rd./Twin Ponds Dr.

Alternate #1 uses Falmouth Rd./Twin Pond Dr. with improvements to existing infrastructure (i.e., sidewalks and pedestrian RR crossings) and upgrades to existing trails using the CMP Utility corridor from the school campus to the trails at the McCrann/McLaughlin properties as well as adding either an aluminum bridge (similar to the bridge at the River Point property) OR a cantilevered bridge adjacent to the MDOT Allen’s Bridge as a viable option.

Alternate #2 – Woodville Rd./Field Rd.

Alternate #2 conceptually would improve existing infrastructure by adding side walks on Woodville Road and a pedestrian RR crossing as well as side walks on Field Road which would lead users to the existing trail entrance (White Trail) to Falmouth Community Park North from Field Road. The committee expressed concern with the existing topography and lines of sight with the Field Road option.

Recommendation

The CPCC unanimously supports the **Falmouth/Twin Pond, Alternative #1** approach and has stated that this option will “in the long run add more value to more users”. Committee members additionally mentioned that even if the town is able to develop a corridor through the woods, improvements to Falmouth Road need to be addressed to make it safer for bicycles as well as pedestrians.

The committee is aware that the Bicycle/Pedestrian Stakeholders Group has been meeting to discuss potential projects to enhance bicycle and pedestrian experiences in Falmouth and a project such as Alternate #1 may be of interest. So as to not duplicate efforts, the CPCC would like the staff representation of each committee to work cooperatively and assess the feasibility of improvements to this area of Falmouth Road, the Pan Am Railroad Crossing and Twin Pond Drive. The CPCC Chair, Justin Beauregard, is acting as a liaison between the committees currently which will also be beneficial to this end.

The committee is also in favor of the on-going effort to procure an approximately 5 acre parcel of land from an abutter so as to secure a location for a bridge, at-grade RR crossing or tunnel from the school campus to Community Park at some point in the future.

History

1996 - JAMM Structural and Civil Engineering - Preliminary construction and preliminary cost

1999 - T. Gorrill, PE - DeLuca-Hoffman - Preliminary construction cost options - Falmouth Trail Railroad - Underpass 10’ box culvert

2002 – Town RFP for East Branch Recreation Path – Gorrill & Palmer responded

2007 – Piscataqua River deteriorated snowmobile bridge removed and town commitment to not condone RR crossing

2010 – Gorrill & Palmer prepared Preliminary Assessment for potential East Branch Recreation Path

2012 – geotechnical work regarding possible tunnel connection and some initial cost estimates

2013 – more engineering and estimates

2014 – present - Town Council appoints Community Park Connector Committee and utilizes Gorrill & Palmer to fine tune assessments for a RR crossing using alternative routes. Committee also seeks alternates approaches using existing infrastructure as well as investigates possibility of purchasing approximately 5 acres of abutting land for future crossing potential.