

Selectmen: Rails may not become trails

By Karen Mann
JOURNAL CORRESPONDENT

Selectmen are likely to stop the proposed Rails-to-Trails project after receiving a drafted lease for the land in question.

Last spring, the board said they would support the project, contingent on one condition: that town officials could not be held responsible for any environmental damage done on the property. They asked that an indemnification clause be put into the document before they lease the land from its owner, the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority.

The Rails-to-Trails project would convert approximately 2.5 miles of land containing unused railroad tracks, into a bicycle path. Residents voted last spring in a ballot election to support the project.

Town Administrator Greg Barnes said the copy of the lease he received did not have this indemnification clause in it. The clause would make the MBTA, not town officials, liable for any environmental harm

created on the land.

Selectman Maureen Denig said since this was not included, selectmen should stop the project now, before any more time and effort is expended.

According to selectmen, the Rails-to-Trails committee still has to have a feasibility test conducted on the area, which would cost about \$25,000. The committee is trying to obtain grants and fund-raise for the money.

Selectmen are going to set a meeting date to discuss the lease and project with the necessary parties.

Board Chairman Robert Plamondon said since a feasibility test had to still be performed, there was no reason to set a meeting date.

Selectman Maureen Denig disagreed, saying they needed to explain to the committees what happened with the lease agreement. Chenelle seconded this opinion.

"We might as well stop it now if it is going to be stopped later because there is no indemnification clause," said Chenelle.

Selectmen voted to discuss the issue at their meeting on Tuesday, Dec. 5.

In Other News:

• Plamondon raised concerns he had with Fire Chief William Donahue's procedure for training new recruits before they are appointed as recruit firefighters.

Donahue administered a physical ability test to the potential recruits, which he said he is able to do as a certified fire instructor.

Plamondon was worried about liability issues, and felt it didn't put town officials in a good position if something happened to one of the recruits during the training.

Donahue said his department's version of the test is simple.

"Ours is to make sure they can do basic things," said Donahue. He added that each recruit signed waivers and forms before taking the test.

Donahue said the other option is to send new recruits to the fire academy, for which residents would be paying \$150 per

firefighter.

Donahue said he would prefer potential candidates take the test before they are appointed as recruit firefighters. Plamondon was still unsatisfied with the liability issues that might arise from doing it in that order.

Donahue asked then that in the future, recruit firefighters be appointed contingent on the fact they pass the PAT test and their medical physical.

• Linda Mack was appointed to serve on the conservation commission for a one-year term. Mack will serve as a general member.

• Selectmen amended a motion passed at their last meeting in which they agreed to pay acting conservation agent Leslie Gabrilski for her time serving in this position. Selectmen had originally agreed to pay Gabrilski at the conservation agent rate from the date she was appointed by the conservation commission to temporarily fill that position, which was Sept. 27. Selectmen decided she would receive the pay dating back to Sept. 13, the day the conservation commission voted to have Gabrilski paid at the conservation agent rate.



Girl Scouts Troop #643 members Vanessa Boisse, Jessica Champagne, Emily Arsenault, Sara King, Leaders Chris Boisse and Kelly Arsenault, and TEO members Hirk Fortin and Ken Gerken. (Missing from photo, Don Cowan.)

Scouts help roll money for TEO drive

Members of Townsend Girl Scout Troop #643 helped roll \$780 in change for the Townsend Ecumenical Outreach.

The troop helped to count and roll change donated during the TEO Summer Penny Drive so the money could be used by the group.

While volunteers Ken Gerken and Hirk Fortin sorted all the change, the girls counted and rolled pennies for several hours.

This is the fourth year the Girl Scouts have assisted with counting change from the TEO drive. They are aware of the importance of the fund-raiser and know that all proceeds assist residents and aid in an emergency.

This year the total for the Summer Penny Drive was \$780.

The Cadette/Senior Troop currently has six members and they invite girls in Townsend (grades 7-12) to join the troop. Meetings are held at Hawthorne Brook Middle School on Wednesdays, immediately after school. The troop actively provides community service, works to develop their leadership skills, plans camping trips and works on interesting projects. Please call troop advisor Chris Boisse at (978) 597-6836 for more information about Girl Scouts in Townsend.

If you didn't happen to see a canister at one of Townsend's businesses and would like to make a contribution, please contact TEO at (978) 597-2549 or you may write to TEO, 82 Bayberry Hill Rd, West Townsend MA 01474.

—Submitted to The Journal

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Session 1
Managing the Effects of Illness and Treatment
Thursday, November 2
1:30 - 3:30 pm

Session 2
Keeping Well in Mind and Body
Communicating Concerns and Feelings
Thursday, November 9
1:30 - 3:30 pm

Session 3
Relieving Cancer Pain
Celebrating Life
Thursday, November 16
1:30 - 3:30 pm

All sessions held at the
Simonds-Sinon
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Burbank Campus

Brian Bergevin
Conference Room

275 Nichols Road, Fitchburg, MA

**All sessions are free and
open to the public.**

To register or for more information,
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