

Minutes for the Public Meeting held on January 27, 2020

Overview

Over 40 people attended the public meeting to discuss the findings of the Trail Feasibility Study to find a route for an off-road, multiuse trail from Gettysburg, south to the Maryland border, ending near Maryland. Prior to the meeting starting, some people were looking over several maps that were attached to the walls of the room. These maps showed some of the many routes that were evaluated. Members of the Trail Study Committee were present to answer questions that people had about the maps.

Eight meeting attendees were members of the Trail Study Committee, another five attendees were members of Healthy Adams Bicycle/Pedestrian, Inc., and three were members of the consultant team that conducted the study. Other notable attendees were Steven Sims, Superintendent for Gettysburg National Military Park (GNMP), Steve Toddes, Cumberland Township Supervisor, the Mayor of Emmitsburg, MD and an Emmitsburg Town Council member. Zachary Bolitho, Division Chief for Resource Management at GNMP, spoke about the GNMP support for the trail and introduced Mr. Sims.

At 5:30 p.m., Dennis Hicketier, Project Officer, welcomed everyone and reviewed what the study was about and why it was being done. He introduced Mr. Bolitho, who provided the position of GNMP. Then Dennis introduced Mr. Bob Thomas, from Campbell, Thomas, & Co., who presented the study results. Bob also introduced two members of his team, Douglas Maisey and Tim Wilson.

Bob used over 60 PowerPoint slides, in less than 60 minutes, to present the study findings. There were questions from the audience during and after the presentation.

Questions or comments included-

1. Show me the slide again that listed the cost savings for health benefits and explain.
2. Explain how these physical activities can reduce personal health costs.
3. Is it a given then, that the trail will go out to Red Rock Road?
4. If you cannot obtain property for the trail, south of Red Rock Road, will you go back to Sachs Covered Bridge to find a new route?

People making supportive comments about the prospective trail during the meeting included-

1. Paul Kellett, Freedom Township Supervisor
2. Town of Emmitsburg Council member
3. Resident living on Irishtown Road

No one voiced direct opposition to the trail during the meeting, although some property owners did so after the meeting was over.

Below are key observations provided by members of the Trail Study Committee.

Minutes for the Public Meeting held on January 27, 2020

From Paul Kellett, Freedom Township Supervisor

I thought the meeting went well with most people in attendance in favor of the trail. Those with concerns appeared to have fewer concerns by the end of the meeting. Although the ability to acquire off road easements from some property owners remains elusive.

From Rich Luquette, Liberty Township Planning Commission member.

I thought the meeting went well and the presentation was properly focused. Some key points.

1. The audience seemed largely supportive of the effort.
2. Encouraged by the expressed desire for a spur trail to connect Carroll Valley.
3. Lingering concern from Shriver Road residents. The alignment as a shared road versus a side path seems to have alleviated some of the previously expressed opposition.
4. Expressed support by Park Service personnel and Emmitsburg officials was significant.
5. Point of curiosity: Wenschhof is correct. As an interesting point the County Tax Parcel GIS map shows the spelling as Wenschhoff. However, the information for an individual lot shows the spelling as Wenschhof. See image below.

From James Paddock, Cumberland Township Representative

- I thought the meeting went well!
- I thought our consultant team did well.
- I suggest future meetings would utilize a microphone, the acoustics are poor in the building.
- It was great that the NPS was well represented and spoke on their support.
- It was great to have the mayor and council member of Emmitsburg attend and speak and support the GHT.

From Kip Hamilton, Area Churches Representative

I echo the comments about this meeting going better than the first. Perhaps it was the change in format? It did seem like people were much less hostile.

I came very close at the end of making the point that there are only so many ways to get from here to there. The people against the trail may think that if they do not cooperate with the project that they will stop it from happening, when the reality is that instead of preventing the project, their non-cooperation is just throwing the trail users out into the street. So instead of getting a nicely landscaped path on their property, they are putting people at risk. The trail users will still be there, just 20 feet farther away in the road. So, I guess I don't see their point.

From Dafna Reiner

- I thought that the meeting went well.

Minutes for the Public Meeting held on January 27, 2020

- I do feel like that those opposed to the trail felt less comfortable in a "presentation" setting and were not as vocal as they were in the "group table" setting that we had in the last meeting.
- I echo Jim's thoughts on the need for a microphone.
- It was very beneficial to have both Zach Bolitho and the new Superintendent attend. For the new Sup't, this was a good introduction of the greater community and regional ties that exist.
- I appreciated the "planting for my grandchildren" metaphor from Paul Kellett.

From Chris Berger, Borough Council Representative

From Sarah Kipp, Land Conservancy Representative

From Dennis Hicketier, Project Officer

1. There was good attendance with over 40 people in total. Several landowners were present, some of whom attended the first meeting. The majority of people present supported the trail, but several landowners still opposed the trail.
2. We should have used a portable microphone as noise from heating blowers made it difficult to hear the speakers.
3. Having representatives from: Gettysburg National Military Park; Freedom Township; Fairfield, PA; and Emmitsburg, MD speak in support of the trail was very helpful.
4. The CTC presentation provided good visual displays about trails and the roads and lands being considered in Adams County. The presentation hit all the key points about where the trail could go and how land could be acquired for the trail. Good answers were provided to questions.
5. Passing the sign-in sheet around was less obtrusive than having people sign-in as they entered the room. However, we needed to do a better job of ensuring that everyone put their name and contact information on the sheet.
6. Viewing the proposed routes on the maps was difficult unless a person stood right in front of the map and carefully followed the routes. Another option would be to have each map enlarged on the PowerPoint slides and split in two with a top half on one slide and bottom half on a second slide. Displayed on the projection screen, people could possibly follow where the routes were going, so they did not have to go to the maps on the wall.

Minutes for the Public Meeting held on January 27, 2020

Below are key observations provided by board members of Healthy Adams Bicycle/ Pedestrian, Inc.

From Eric Meyer, President of HABPI

I was also pleased with the turnout and the presentation as a whole. Here are my observations:

- It was good to get strong statements from some of the key officials including the National Park Service, Emmitsburg, and Freedom Township on why they support the project. It helps counter the notion that some may have that this is something only a few bike riders want.
- There was less tension than the first meeting as I think people learned then that there was no intent to invoke eminent domain to acquire property to build this trail. So, the homeowners who did attend seemed a bit calmer.
- There seemed to be some people who question why we would bother building an off-road trail (when the roads are so quiet anyway). I think we somewhat reinforce that when we talk about using roads as an interim route for the trail. Certain roads, like Red Rock or Schriver, are probably ok as longer term “interim” on-road routes. But Pumping Station and many others would not be suitable long term if we are trying to build a trail that is suitable for a family with young kids, etc. We clearly need to deal with what is practical short term in developing the trail but we also need to not lose sight of the long-term goal.
- I asked Bob Thomas about getting examples of trails that had been successfully developed under similar circumstances as ours (requiring easements from numerous individuals) and he said that they knew that was something they needed to do and would be getting us that info as part of the final report.
- The Emmitsburg official mentioned after the meeting all the work that was underway to develop trails between Frederick and Emmitsburg. They clearly have a more active alternative transportation infrastructure in place that helps them (he mentioned support from US Senator Cardin’s office, for example).
- There was a question during the meeting about potentially having a spur trail(s) that connects other locations like Fairfield or Carrol Valley which was a good lead-in to highlight the longer-term potential of trail development.

From Tom Jolin, Past President of HABPI, Gettysburg Inner Loop Coordinator

Great meeting.... very upbeat given the possible overt push back from a few of the residents. Bob has a wonderful approach. It is clear that we go with our friendly owners first, that being GNMP, Eisenhower Site, and Tim Shield’s Nature Center. We can take it to the road where we start having resistance and stop it there for the time being. In the meantime, we can start pushing north on..., was it Irish Road? The York County Rail Trail Authority does that all the time: start at each end, trying to fill in the middle. Once we get started at each end, we can do some temporary signing until safer infrastructure is built.

Minutes for the Public Meeting held on January 27, 2020

Having the GNMP (Zack Bolitho) give their public endorsement was big. And having the Emmitsburg officials stand and give their affirmative approval was big.

Bob's statement about the CSX crossing near Philadelphia was profound. They asked CSX for many years to use a bridge, always being rejected. And now they are finally in negotiations. It takes patience, plus persistence and as coaches tell their teams, *you have to show up to win*. And by the way this same philosophy also applies to the GIL, Conewago Township and Hanover Shoe Farms. But I'm saying something we all know.

This was a wonderful effort. Big thanks to you movers and shakers on this.

From Steve Niebler

Great job, Dennis. The good news is that I don't have many observations, meaning that the meeting wasn't very contentious. I think most of those who were opposed have had a chance to think about it, talk to their neighbors & realize that if it isn't an asset, neither is it the end of the world. You & HABPI should be proud of the progress that's been made.

From John Kuhn, HABPI Board Member

My biggest problem as a person with hearing difficulties was being unable to hear most of the presentation and comments even though seated in the front left corner. If future presentations are made may I suggest that portable mics be used if they can be obtained.

As it turned out the Kelletts were the people seated most closely to me and, of course, they are very much in favor of the project.

It seems to me that this project is about vision. It's about one of those opportunities in life to be part of something bigger than one's self that could influence the culture of the community for decades. Many of the people in the audience will not live to see this project to fruition and many of the landowners will have passed title to their properties to new owners long before trails are constructed. Many people of my generation lament the erosion of the qualities of life experienced when we were young. One of those experiences included the ability to ride a bike safely wherever we wanted to go. Now youngsters don't go outside as much as in the past and one of the reasons is parental safety concern. Here is an opportunity to develop a safe route for youngsters and older folks alike to enjoy the outdoors. This area will continue to maintain its rural character but, 6 decades of living here teaches me that residential and traffic growth continues and will continue, albeit slowly and steadily. As I mentioned to some, 60 years ago there was much talk about an east-west Rt. 30 bypass around Gettysburg. It never happened and now is not likely to happen because of cost and logistical issues. Gettysburg continues to suffer that shortsightedness as large trucks negatively impact the road surfaces and structural integrity of buildings in the borough. The point is that if our goal in life is to leave behind a community better off than the one we enjoy presently we must have the vision, courage and selflessness to make that happen. As property owners we are only temporary stewards of our

Minutes for the Public Meeting held on January 27, 2020

land no matter how long we hold title. Each property owner has the absolute right to embrace or reject this project. But here is one of those opportunities to think beyond self to a greater good - one, like the by-pass, for which future generations will either praise or criticize the action taken when the possibility was presented.

From Baird Tipson

I thought the presentation was excellent and the lack of hostile questions promising. Getting the trail out to Red Rock with on-road riding (with good signage along the way) from there to Emmitsburg sounds like a very doable Phase One to me, and I thought Bob's response to the question about whether it made sense to have an off-road path along Shriver Road was especially good. So long as there is little traffic, it's something that might be done in the future if funds became available but far less important than getting other parts of the trail done. If 25 years from now there's more traffic and the landowners see how little disruption has been caused and how nice it would be to have easy access to the trail, minds could change. For the moment we have more important fish to fry.