

ERIE TO PITTSBURGH TRAIL ALLIANCE (EPTA), Inc.

Minutes of December 23, 2013 Meeting

Held at Franklin Industrial Commercial Development Authority, 191 Howard Street, Franklin, PA

Participants

Organization

Trail Organization and At-Large Members:

Ron Steffey	Armstrong Rails-to-Trails Association (delegate)
Toni Henry	Armstrong Rails-to-Trails Association (alternate delegate)
Tom Baxter	Friends of the Riverfront- Three Rivers Heritage Trail (delegate)
Parke Wentling	Mercer County Trails Association (delegate)
Kim Harris	Oil Region Alliance (delegate)
Marilyn Black	Oil Region Alliance of Business, Industry & Tourism (alternate delegate)
Sandy Mateer	Redbank Valley Trails Association (delegate)
Leah Carter	Titusville Area Trails Association (delegate)
Roy Weil	At-Large (delegate)
Mary Shaw	At-Large (alternate delegate)

Advisor:

Tracy Stack	PA DCNR, Bureau of Recreation and Conservation
Amy Camp	PA Environmental Council

Guests:

Debra Frawley	Greenways Coordinator, Council on Greenways and Trails
Marty Henry	Armstrong Rails-to-Trails Association
Mike Steimer	Armstrong Trails
Matt Lehman	Allegheny Valley Trails Association

Welcome: President Parke Wentling presided and called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m., and welcomed all attendees. Participants were asked to introduce themselves to attendees.

Approval of Minutes: Minutes of the July 24, 2013 meeting were provided in advance. It was moved by R. Weil, seconded by R. Steffey, and motion carried to approve the minutes as prepared.

Treasurer's Report: The Treasurer's Report was provided by T. Baxter, the Treasurer. The year-end balance is \$3,623.42. Invoices for membership will be issued on January 15, 2014 for the 2014 year. It was noted that two members have not paid dues for 2013. L. Carter moved to approve the Treasurer's report as provided; R. Weil seconded; the motion carried.

A brief discussion was held regarding member organizations that have not had representation at recent meetings, and other organizations/agencies that should possibly be invited to join the EPTA as voting members. It was determined that State Agencies should remain as Supporting Agencies, and would likely not become dues paying members; thus, they serve more in the advisory capacity. T. Baxter will contact Western PA Port Authority regarding their wish to remain as a dues paying voting member. He will also contact Bike Erie regarding becoming a member and having a board seat. The Presque Isle Cycling Club is a very active club; P. Wentling will contact this group regarding their interest in becoming a member and having a board seat.

New Business:

1. **Vice President Vacancy:** Due to the passing of Mr. Holden, the Vice President's seat is vacant. K. Harris reported that the EPTA By-laws state an election must be held to fill the seat, although the President can fill the seat until an election is held. Moving toward an election to fill the vacancy K. Harris nominated R. Steffey as Vice President for the balance of the current Vice President's term; R. Weil seconded the motion. P. Wentling opened the floor to nominations. There being no additional nomination, R. Weil motioned to close nominations

and elect R. Steffey as Vice President; motioned seconded by S. Mateer; motion approved. R. Steffey thanked the board.

P. Wentling brought to the Board's attention the September 2, 2013 email correspondence from Mr. Holden that was sent to the entire Board in regards to Mr. Holden's thoughts on the value of the EPTA. Mr. Wentling requested that everyone review the email if they had not yet read it; copies were circulated to attendees.

2. **Update of Member Organization's Contact Information:** K. Harris presented and circulated the most current listing of contact information for Board Members and supporting agencies/individuals. Each participant present was asked to review their information making any required changes, or initialing that the information was correct. It is important to have correct contact information for notifications, and keeping people informed. M. Shaw suggested two contact lists be made -- one for voting Board Members, and the other inclusive of all interested parties.
3. **Approval of 2014 Meeting Dates:** P. Wentling presented a brief history of when meetings have been held indicating that evening and weekends meeting had a very low attendance in the past. The following is the tentative schedule of dates, host agency(ies), and locations for the EPTA 2014 quarterly meetings:

Date	Host(s)	Tentative Location
Monday, January 20	Mercer County Trails Association	Greenville at the Chamber of Commerce
Tuesday, April 22	Oil Region Alliance, and Titusville Area Trails Association	Titusville at Drake Well Museum
Wednesday, July 22	Redbank Valley Trails Association and Armstrong Rails-to-Trails Association	New Bethlehem - location to be announced
Wednesday, October 22	Friends of the River Front and PA Environmental Council	Aspenwall Riverfront Park

All meetings are to begin at 10:00 AM, unless otherwise noted. Please reserve these dates on your calendars.

All hosting organizations agreed to confirm the exact location for meetings by January 15, 2014.

Other New Business:

1. **Bylaw Updates:** K. Harris noted that there are several sections in our Bylaws that need to be updated such as Section 1.3 Membership, currently Redbank Valley is not included; Section 2.2 Number and Term of Board Members, this needs looked at since we have added members; and Section 2.7 Quorum, at times we have had difficulty having a quorum at meetings. A committee to review and make suggested changes to the bylaws was recommended; the board agreed. P. Wentling appointed M. Black as Chair of the Committee with T. Baxter, R. Steffey and A. Camp serving on the committee. K. Harris noted that once suggestions are received and Board has had the opportunity for input; that the Board must be given a written notice a minimum of 10 days of any Board meeting at which proposed changes to the Bylaws of the Corporation are to be considered or acted upon. M. Shaw commented that the EPTA Board should maintain discretion and patience. It was also suggested to possibly adjust a quorum from one-half to one third of voting members, and to include electronic conferencing for meetings.
2. **General Membership:** M. Black suggested EPTA should consider reconfiguring the membership to have a Board Membership and a general membership. This could provide a way for those listed as supporting agencies to participate other than being on the Board of Directors. P. Wentling wondered if we might want to consider sub regions. It was noted by K. Harris that this type of membership is beneficial as it could provide not only monetary support, but support that may assist as we continue our vision for contacting elected officials, and volunteers who may step up to the plate to assist trail groups with maintenance and many other tasks. A general membership needs added to the Bylaws; the appointed Committee will look at adding general membership.

3. National Trails Designation: M. Shaw asked the Board if the group wanted to consider National Trail designation for the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail. She noted that several segments along the EPT already have this designation including the Allegheny River Trail, Presque Isle Bike Trail, Samuel Justus Trail, Three Rivers Heritage Trail, Oil Creek State Park Bike Trail and Sandy Creek Trail that is a spur to the EPT. A. Camp stated she is on the Board of the American Trails Association, which oversees this type of designation. Benefits of the designation are chiefly on the marketing and public relations end, but also guidance, networking, and advice. It was noted that criteria includes that the trail be open to public use for at least 10 years after designation. The application process involves gathering letters of support from state and municipalities, for which member organization assistance will be needed. Peggy Pings is the NPS contact regarding the application for this designation. Individual trails designation could also be part of this effort as overlay of designation is permitted, and trail organizations should let M. Shaw know if they are interested in this individual designation, they can work with her. R. Steffey indicated his interest to applying for this national designation for the Armstrong Trail. T. Baxter noted that he believes there is the criteria that a trail must cross county lines, which could hinder some individual trails. L. Carter stated that this designation may bring some of the other trail groups along the EPT and its designated spurs back to the table. K. Harris motioned that M. Shaw proceed with the application prior to the November 1, 2014 deadline for the entire EPT including spurs which are willing; R. Weil seconded; motion carried. Individual trail organizations that would like to seek this national designation should contact M. Shaw.
4. Jim Holden Memorial/Honorarium Event: Tom Sexton of Rails-to-Trails Conservancy asked to be notified for possible involvement in any Jim Holden memorial/honorarium event/commemoration. K. Harris noted that a memorial ride has been discussed locally, but it has been felt that this event maybe better suited for EPTA to host. T. Sexton would definitely be interested in this event. Thoughts are to arrange a ride in 2014 Titusville to Foxburg; this would be a 62-mile ride (one or two days). This could be held as a fundraiser with proceeds benefiting EPT via the EPTA. Discussion regarding event included would need to consider transportation, would need a budget, a date that did not conflict with other major rides and local events. Matt Lehman will run the idea by AVTA. R. Steffey made a motion to authorize a committee to explore this idea; R. Weil seconded; motion carried. Volunteers for this committee are K. Harris, P. Wentling, Matt Lehman, Ron Steffey and Mike Steimer.
5. Recent EPT P.R.: It was noted that the fall 2013 edition of “Spokes-People”, the PennDOT bicycling newsletter, included a very nice article on the Three Rivers Heritage Trail. This is the second consecutive edition that included an article of a segment of the EPT.
6. PA’s DCNR “Trail Design and Development Principles Manual” is now available and can be downloaded from their website at http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/cs/groups/public/documents/document/dcnr_20028130.pdf
7. The “American Rails with Trails” Planning Resource Guide: This guide has been updated and is available for download from the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy website at <http://www.railstotrails.org/ourWork/reports/railwithtrail/report.html>
8. 2014 Pa Downtown Center Conference: S. Mateer alerted attendees that the Pa. Downtown Center will be hosting a conference June 1 – 4, 2014 in Altoona. This year’s conference title is “Connecting Nature, Commerce, and Community.” For additional information, please visit <http://www.padowntown.org>.
9. EPT Delegate for the “Power of 32”: “The Power of 32” is a multi-state comprehensive regional trail network, which now includes 51 counties in Western Maryland, New York, Ohio, Western PA, and West Virginia. Jim Holden had been the representative for the EPT; A. Camp requested a delegate for the EPT. P. Wentling will serve as the delegate for EPT and R. Steffey will serve as alternate.
10. 2014 DCNR Grant Workshops Scheduled: T. Stack reminded attendees that the DCNR grant websites are scheduled, and she encouraged those anticipating submitting a grant application to attend; to access a schedule and/or to register visit the DCNR website.

Old Business:

1. EPT Logo: M. Black provided an update of EPT Trail logo signs installed on the Queen City Trail and the McClintock Trail. The signage along these trails was installed on existing posts and on new posts where required. The signage was produced and installed with a mini-grant from the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy. A cost sheet for the signage and vendor information was made available to meeting participants. If others want to use the vendor there will be no set-up fee since this has already been paid for under the contract with ORA. AVTA has been installing EPT logo signage on replica railroad mile markers. Armstrong Rails-to-Trails are looking at where trail intersects state roads and using the TODs program; it was noted that the EPT signage required by PennDOT has not yet been designed. PennDOT provided a very small example, but the resolution is extremely poor. M. Shaw noted that looking to the future, the EPTA may want to consider selling items with the logo, on perhaps via the website.

No update was available on the status of the registration of the EPT logo, as B. Scholl was not present at today's meeting.

2. EPT Website: Deb Frawley up until April 2013 administered the EPT website, when Julia Eagles took over the website administration. It is believed that J. Eagles transferred the website format from that which Reeves (the firm EPTA contracted with to develop the website) had used to setup the website to WordPress (free open source website management software). J. Eagles has access to update the websites. D. Frawley is not familiar with WordPress software. P. Wentling questioned if D. Frawley is interested either in administering the website once again as part of her current Greenways position or as freelance for a stipend. D. Frawley stated if it is part of her Greenways position, she needs the Council on the Greenways and Trails Board approval. D. Frawley is to consider the website administration, check with her Board of Directors, and report to EPTA at a future meeting. P. Wentling noted that whoever the administrator will be, it is up to individual trail groups to provide information for updates to the website, such as openings, closings, news items, and photographs.

EPT also has a Facebook page that is currently administered by both D. Frawley and Greg Troyer. A. Camp noted that rail-trail followers are mainly between the ages of 30 to 70. S. Mateer stated that EPTA needs to keep both the website and Facebook current and interactive.

R. Weil will contact J. Eagles to ask her intentions and preference with the EPT website.

3. Greenways and Trails Summit: M. Black provided a brief overview of the Greenways and Trails Summit held in Franklin in September 2013. The overall response from participants was positive. The paid registration was just under 200 and included representatives from agencies, municipalities, and volunteers. It was requested by local Summit Committee Members that the Summit return to Western PA when the event has made its rotation.
4. Rails-to-Trails Survey in the Oil Region: D. Frawley provided an overview of the project. The survey included Titusville to Parker. Twelve counters were placed at strategic entry points to the trail system, and survey boxes were placed at trailheads. Four hundred+ surveys were returned during the study period. It appears that once the raw data is analyzed the study will reveal an increase in usership from the 2006 study that was conducted in the area. D. Frawley distributed raw numbers to participants for review.
5. Kiosk in Foxburg: D. Frawley provided an update of the kiosk that consists of three panels including one panel with an EPT map that shows the closest towns that offer amenities to trail users. Bally Exhibit is the designer and Pannier is fabricating the panels. D. Frawley mentioned there are several communities working toward kiosks, and that there are no guidelines to direct the development of a standard kiosk for the EPT. Participants had a brief discussion on a guideline manual. It was noted that EPTA can apply for a greenways mini-grant through the Northwest Commission to research and develop a graphic standard with a guideline manual for kiosk and signage along the EPT. Marilyn Black is willing to write the grant application, which likely will need a municipality as an lead applicant. R. Weil motioned that EPTA authorize the submission of a mini-grant application for the Northwest Commission Greenways mini-grant program when the round of granting opens to develop a signage plan based on the Great Allegheny Passage guidelines as they permitted, with a cash match from EPTA up to \$1,000; R. Steffey seconded; motion carried.

Members Reports on Progress and Plans: Attendees provided updates on progress and plans by their respective organizations.

Armstrong Rails to Trails Association – R. Steffey submitted a written report, which is attached to these minutes. In addition, it was noted that the Allegheny Valley Land Trust was awarded \$40,000 through a DCNR C2P2 grant to further develop the Armstrong Trail in Pine Township. Work to include the construction of approximately 0.7 miles of trail parallel to the Allegheny River from Fifth Street to Templeton Creek, ADA access, landscaping, project sign, and other related site improvements. Also, Kittanning Borough is awarded a \$36,000 DCNR C2P2 grant to further develop of the Armstrong Trail, work to include the ADA access ramp between Jud Field and YMCA soccer fields, installation of site amenities, fencing, ADA access, landscaping, project sign and other related site improvements.

Allegheny Valley Trails Association – Mr. Bill Weller is the new President. The group is re-organizing to move forward. There are a few vacancies on the board that will be filled at their members meeting in May 2014. The priority is to maintain the trail that is on the ground, and constructing the Gap from Emlenton to Foxburg. The group is still working on the RR bridge at the mouth of French Creek in Franklin; the owner would like to donate the bridge, and it is likely that the AVTA will be the new owner. The AVTA was awarded a \$140,000 DCNR C2P2 grant for the rehabilitation of the Allegheny River Trail in Rockland Township, work to include the rehabilitation of approximately 5 miles of trail from the Belmar Bridge at the junction of East Sandy Creek and the Allegheny River to Brandon Road, ADA access, landscaping, project sign, and other related site improvements.

Samuel Justus Trail – The City of Oil City has received ROW with all property owners that will take the trail off West First Street from Darr Street to the current trailhead. The City is looking to get rid of 1000s of old RR ties.

Clear Lake Authority - The feasibility study is complete, and appraisals of property are the next step.

Friends of the Riverfront - Continue to work on easements, and property acquisitions.

McClintock Trail - Ribbon Cutting/ Inaugural Ride held on Sept 17, 2013; over 100 in attendance. Some guests accepted an offer to ride the train to inspect the rail with trail; others rode the trail with K. Harris and J. Holden leading the ride. ORA is working on the Oil Creek Memorial Landing trailhead for the southern end of McClintock Trail; currently it is under design. ORA has been notified that a grant award of \$2,000 has been awarded through the Canoe Access Development Fund via Western PA Conservancy to assist with the canoe access component of the project. It was noted that this fund was endowed by Roy Weil and Mary Shaw.

Mercer County Trails Association – A small equipment statewide organization is possibly assisting in the spring 2014 to help with Shenango Valley Trail. A donor is willing to contribute a portion of the required funds for a property acquisition.

Redbank Valley Trails Association – Allegheny Valley Land Trust has been awarded a \$500,000 DCNR C2P2 grant to further development of the Redbank Valley Trail in Porter and Madison Townships. Work to include the rehabilitation of the Climax Tunnel, construction of a trailhead at the western portal, construction of approximately 8.7 miles of trail from the western portal in Porter Township to the Longpoint Tunnel in Madison Township, ADA access, landscaping, project sign, and other related site improvements.

Titusville Area Trails Association - The Community of Titusville is amidst some reorganization in regards to what entity will be working on trails; it is expected that the Titusville Area Trails Association will take on a more active role than in the recent past. The Trail Town study is complete; and a group that includes interested businesses, agencies, and individuals are working toward implementation of some of the recommendations in the study.

No reports were provided today by Chautauqua Rails-to-Trails Association, Erie-Western Pa. Port Authority, or the Northwestern PA Trails Association.

Other items of Business:

- Camp noted that she is pleased to see the EPTA working on standards for signage. The trail organizations along the GAP are in their 10th year of updating signage to their agreed upon standard.
- M. Black provided an overview of the ORA Trail Entrepreneurial Business Plan Contest along the EPT.
- Reminder the “Trail Volunteer Fund” is available for assistance on volunteer trail projects; the next official deadline is March 1, 2014. More information on this fund is available on line at <http://they-working.org/>

Next Meeting: The next meeting is scheduled for January 20, 2014 hosted by P. Wentling and will likely in Greenville. Meeting location and directions will be sent out prior to the meeting once the details are confirmed.

Adjournment: R. Weil moved, S. Mateer seconded, and motion carried to adjourn today’s meeting; 1:40 p.m.

****P. Wentling has confirmed that the January 20, 2014 EPTA meeting will be held at 10:00 AM at the Greenville Chamber of Commerce; located at 182 Main Street, Greenville. Ample parking is available for the Greenville Chamber of Commerce in the rear of the building which accessed via Shenango Street.

Respectfully submitted,
Kim Harris (Secretary, EPTA)
Minutes prepared 12/30/2013

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N Drive/Erie to Pittsburgh Trail/EPTA minutes from 12-23-13 Franklin meeting