

ERIE TO PITTSBURGH TRAIL ALLIANCE (EPTA)
Minutes of March 31, 2011 Meeting in Oil City, PA
Held at the Genova's Restaurant

Participants

Organization

Trail Organization Members:

Barney Scholl	Mercer County Trails Association (alternate)
Jim Holden	Allegheny Valley Trails Association (delegate)
Mike Steimer	Armstrong Rails to Trails Association (delegate)
Tom Baxter	Friends of the Riverfront (delegate)
Jim Fincher	Chautauqua Rails to Trails Association (delegate)
Greg Troyer	Northwest Pa. Trail Association (delegate)
Marilyn Black	Oil Region Alliance of Business, Industry & Tourism (delegate)
Leah Carter	Titusville Area Trails Association (delegate)
Julia Eagles	Lake Erie Arboretum at Frontier Park (member at large)
Darla Cravotta	Allegheny County (member at large)
Morris Waid	Crawford County Commissioner (member at large)

Advisors:

Hannah Hardy	Pa. Environmental Council
Patricia Tomes	Rails to Trails Conservancy
Susan Smith	Northwest PA Regional Planning and Development Commission

Guests:

Debra Frawley	Greenways Coordinator, Council on Greenways and Trails
Mary Shaw	Co-Author, Free Wheeling Easy; and Linking Up
Roy Weil	Co-Author, Free Wheeling Easy; and Linking Up
Melissa Mann	Oil Region Alliance of Business, Industry & Tourism

Welcome and Introductions: Jim Holden presided and called the meeting to order at 10:30 a.m. An agenda sheet for today's meeting was distributed in advance. He mentioned that Mia Burke (author of "Joy Ride"; former Bike-Pedestrian Coordinator for Portland, Oregon) is the speaker at this year's annual meeting of the Allegheny Valley Trails Association, via Skype. Ms. Eagles circulated "Bicycle Parking Guidelines"; others mentioned that Pittsburgh has a bike parking ordinance already, which is on their website. Attendees introduced themselves.

Minutes: Minutes of the September 21, 2010 meeting were provided in advance. It was moved by Ms. Eagles, seconded by Mr. Fincher, and motion carried to approve the minutes as prepared.

Treasurer's Report: Mr. Baxter distributed copies of the Treasurer's Report for the period of 2010 through March 29, 2011. The account balance as of March 29, 2011 was \$1,701.23. Invoices for calendar year 2011 dues were mailed out on March 29. Mr. Fincher moved, Mrs. Black seconded, and motion carried to approve the financial report as prepared. The IRS Form 990 has been filed for 2010. For audit purposes, the EPTA account is tied to the Friends of the Riverfront; there will be no charge for the 2010 audit services. Mr. Holden indicated that EPTA has not yet selected an abstractor; please provide names of abstractors experienced in tracking railroad records to the attention of Marilyn Black.

Feasibility Study for Millville to Freeport: Mr. Baxter and Mrs. Hardy described the feasibility study which is currently underway for this 26-mile section, which includes 16 miles of Norfolk Southern high speed rail line

along the Allegheny River bank; this ‘unforgiving’ study of 1.5 years to date concentrates on safe links of communities to the river, and how to provide linear links among the 17 municipalities in which some segments like Riverfront Parks are completed. Friends of the Riverfront are trying to purchase for over \$2 million a former marina at Aspenwahl which would become a 7-acre park. May need to consider using some RR service roads as trails. Planners involved in this study include FOR, Allegheny County, PEC, and many local municipalities. On the Great Allegheny Passage, NFX sold overhead rights-of-way to allow trail groups to construct overpasses above high speed line, for instance.

Long-term Maintenance of Trail Segments: Ms. Frawley began a discussion by indicating that some eastern Crawford County municipalities are declining to maintain trail portions; in that case, if Titusville Leisure Services does not conduct maintenance, perhaps volunteers from Titusville Area Trails Association could tackle such ongoing duties. A different approach is that organized by Mr. Malcolm Sias on the 5-Star Trail, for which the Regional Trail Corporation owns maintenance equipment and carries insurance for all segments. Ms. Tomes indicated that even where existing Memos of Understanding are in place between municipalities and trail groups, she’s seeing support/work declining; she suggested the establishment in the Spartansburg area of a stronger Trail Friends group which could borrow mowing equipment from the boro and township. Mr. Troyer said that for the Corry Trail, the snowmobile club does excellent year-round maintenance and also helps reduce ATV misuse of the trail. Ms. Eagles pointed out that trail use patterns must adhere to constraints placed on a segment by the funding sources used to construct that segment. Attendees next generally discussed the concept of EPTA offering services as in the RTC format; no decisions were reached today. Mr. Holden said that AVTA purchased their own maintenance equipment and pays an hourly worker to do the mowing. Ms. Tomes indicated that county parks often have equipment and expertise which might be shared with off-park trails. Mr. Waid suggested use of work release or community service workers for short-term situations like mud slides. Mrs. Shaw reinforced that trail users must make it happen, while being helpful and assertive. For long-term fiscal viability, endowments (either stand-alone, or via community foundations) plus getting a United Way code number are helpful ways to build resources. Mr. Holden offered AVTA’s agreement for a dedicated fund within the Bridge Builders Foundation as an example.

Queen City Trail: Mrs. Carter reported that the trail itinerary/route from downtown Titusville to Hasbrouck Park in Hydetown Borough has been chosen. The engineering firm is doing detailed designs; for a ‘new’ bridge to span approximately 140’ wide Oil Creek, will also consider re-use of a transported historic structure. Project team is contacting property owners to verify routing and negotiate ROWs, etc.

McClintock Trail: Mrs. Black reported (for project manager, ORA’s Kim Harris) that the parking lots at Rynd Farm in OCSP and McClintock Well #1 (managed by PHMC) will be paved this construction season. She also detailed the design work and negotiations for the southern 2 miles from McClintock Well #1 into the intersection of Seneca Street and Route 8 within Oil City. Those entire miles (except for short leg on top of a city-owned flood-control dyke permitted by the USCOE) are immediately adjacent to active slow-speed rail operated by Western New York and Pennsylvania Railroad via long-term lease from Norfolk Southern. Part of the construction involves shifting railroad tracks away from the hillside in order to provide sufficient space for the 8’ wide paved bike path and the 6’ tall see-through chain link fence which will be installed separating the trail from the train. At the conclusion of today’s meeting, several attendees went to look at portions of this new portion of the McClintock Trail, to visualize the “before” construction layout of trail and the new Oil Creek Memorial Landing which the ORA is acquiring and developing.

Applications to DCNR’s C2P2 Grants Program: The Armstrong Trails group requested a letter of support from EPTA for an upcoming application which the Allegheny Valley Land Trust will soon submit to DCNR seeking funding for Phase I of Brady & Beyond. After discussion, it was realized that a standard procedure should be used regarding letters of support to this funder and others. It was moved by Mr. Steimer, seconded by Ms. Eagles, and motion carried that upon request to the EPTA President, EPTA will furnish (after review by the EPTA Executive Committee) letters of support for the planning, implementation, and/or maintenance of segments along the Erie-to-Pittsburgh Trail route.

Armstrong Trails: For 8 miles from Shenley almost to Ford City, the trails group is discussing with the Kiski Junction Railroad whether can use the RR service road as the trail. Armstrong's 15-year-lawsuit is going to summary judgment. The Redbank Trail has been turned over to the Redbank Valley Trails Association which has already redecked one bridge; they are raising funds by selling naming rights for each bridge and tunnel. Armstrong County's 911 system is considering constructing a back-up system of fiber optics on poles along a 2-mile portion of the Armstrong trail corridor, in return for annual rental fees of \$10-\$12 per pole. Rails-to-Trails Conservancy recently printed an economic impact study on the Armstrong Trail, entitled "2010 user Survey and Economic Impact Analysis" which is available at the RTC website. RTC wants in 2012 or 2013 to again conduct the Oil Region NHA economic impact study; DCNR pays RTC to do several of these studies each year. Ms. Tomes summarized, "as trail mileage increases, so do the number of users and \$ amounts expended per trail trip."

Mercer County Trails: Mr. Scholl mentioned that their trail group is slowly acquiring some pieces of the former rail line which went from Franklin through northern Mercer County into Ohio; they're especially eager to purchase parts from Jamestown to the Ohio border; these will offer future linkage possibilities into EPT.

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy: Ms. Tomes provided copies of the article about EPTA which was published in the spring/summer 2011 issue of the RTC magazine; it was written by Susan Weaver under contract with RTC.

Corry Trail: Mr. Troyer indicated that the Northwest Pa. Trail Association recently applied for the new wave of Transportation Enhancement funds made available only in Erie County; awaiting award. On June 18, the Pa. Championship Trail Race will be centered in Waterford; trail groups and other health-related entities are invited to staff information tables at this event (no cost to trails groups; see Greg Troyer). Presque Isle State Park is the site for another trail race on June 19. He encouraged all to involve UPMC and other health groups in trail planning and funding.

New Business:

Google Grant: Mr. Baxter described the Google Grant received by EPTA, providing free advertising. Key word phrases and buzzwords have been turned in for connection to EPTA. Please provide any additional phrases and words to his attention to add to the system.

Chautauqua County Greenways Study: Pashek Associates is the contractor for this study; the first of several public meetings have been held.

LEAF: The Lake Erie Arboretum at Frontier Park (LEAF) is a new organization based at a City-owned park in Erie; Julia Eagles is now employed as their new Director. This location has a pathway for bicyclists now, and they are completing a loop throughout this park connecting to 3 schools. LEAF would like to become a new organizational member of EPTA Board. It was moved by Mr. Steimer, seconded by Mr. Baxter, and motion carried to approve a Bylaw amendment to add LEAF to the membership and Board list, and to designate Ms. Eagles as the delegate from LEAF. No alternate has been selected yet for this year.

End Points for EPTA: Mr. Weil asked what the exact end points for the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail are. In Pittsburgh, it's the fountain at Point State Park downtown. Today, attendees defined Perry Monument in Presque Isle State Park at the upper end, recognizing that overnight parking is not allowed on the peninsula, and thus the parking lot at TREC would be advised.

At-Large Members of Board: With the reclassification earlier today of Julia Eagles from at-large Board member to organizational seat on the Board, a vacancy opened up. Mrs. Black moved, Mrs. Carter seconded, and motion carried to name Roy Weil as a new At-Large Member, with Mary Shaw as the alternate, effective immediately. The new member encouraged attendees to read/edit the draft sections of "Free-Wheeling Easy"

which are being re-published, and provide edits within the next 2 weeks. All proceeds from sales of this book go to the Trail Volunteer Fund.

EPTA Logo and Signs: Ms. Frawley began this discussion by showing a PowerPoint with highlights from the “Graphic Identity & Sign Guidelines Manual” adopted by the Great Allegheny Passage. Today’s attendees agree that it’s time for EPTA to develop a logo and encourage its use by partners on their respective signs, thereby demonstrating consistency and marketing as a unified system. The GAP colors are red, blue, yellow, and black; see manual on the GAP website. Mr. Baxter and Mrs. Black encouraged utilizing the services of a professional graphic artist, not a contest design process. Mr. Weil submitted a sample possible EPT logo. The North Country Trail uses simply a blue star on their signs and as logo. Among today’s attendees, at least 6 member trail organizations have their individual logos; they indicated willingness to show multiple logos on their signs, websites, publications, etc. Ms. Hardy recommended designing logo first and then preparing guidelines for its uses. Mr. Holden appointed the following people to serve as an Ad Hoc Logo Work Group to discuss and draft criteria for logo uses: Debra Frawley, Roy Weil, Tom Baxter, and Patricia Tomes. This Work Group is asked to report back at the next EPTA Board meeting; after the basic concepts are agreed, then more polished graphic services will be secured.

Events Announced: GeoWoodstock IX will be held July 2, 2011 centered at the Warren County Fairgrounds in Pittsfield, PA; there are spaces available for indoor and for outdoor displays yet; contact Debra Frawley or Marilyn Black, who serve on the Board for Penn Soil RC&D Council which is administering what will be the world’s largest international gathering of geocachers with 6,000+ anticipated. The Rails-to-Trails Conservancy will conduct its annual Bicycle Sojourn in Pennsylvania during the third week of July this year. Susan Smith announced that 28 applications were received by the Northwest Commission for the Northwest Greenways Funding pool; award announcements are anticipated by the conclusion of April, 2011.

Idea: In order to broaden participation with EPTA, today it was mentioned to consider establishing Associate Memberships for individuals, groups, municipalities, etc. when that entity does not desire a Board seat. This was referred to the Executive Committee for further deliberation.

Next Meetings: The next meeting will be held Wednesday, June 22, 2011 at 10:30 a.m. in the New Bethlehem, PA area; location to be announced.

Adjournment: After thanking the Oil Region Alliance for hosting today’s working lunch during the Board meeting, Mr. Holden declared today’s meeting adjourned at 1:08 p.m. Some participants then proceeded to view nearby portions of the McClintock Trail.

Respectfully submitted,
Marilyn Black (Secretary, EPTA)
Minutes prepared 4/9/2011

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N Drive/Erie to Pittsburgh Trail/EPTA minutes from 3-31-2011 Oil City meeting