

Residents discuss trail proposal

By Paula Ouimette
Editor
pouimette@turley.com

Craig Della Penna and Elizabeth Johnson to help bridge some of the gaps in the 104-mile trail system.

WARE – Three residents have joined together to propose an extension of the Mass Central Rail Trail, connecting the trail segment that starts at Gibbs Crossing to the downtown area.

Steven Hawk, an avid trail user and advocate for accessible open space, and residents Cindy Allen Bourcier and Pauline Supka, are working with the Executive Director of the Norwottuck Network

At a March 26 gathering held at the Senior Center, Bourcier and Hawk explained their proposal to a group of residents who live in the neighborhood where the proposed trail extension would pass through.

Bourcier said the purpose of the trail is to “navigate our way from one point of town to the other point of town.”

Please see **TRAIL**, page 13

TRAIL from page 1

“It’s not something that’s going to happen overnight,” she said. “And it’s a community effort...hopefully we can all work together.”

Della Penna explained the history of the Mass Central Rail Trail, which spans from Northampton to Boston.

“This is the longest rail to trail project in New England,” he said.

Della Penna said the project is at a “tipping point,” with the Department of Transportation agreeing to price out the costs of the gaps in the trail. He said the efforts to create the trail have the support of four linear-thinking land trusts, including the East Quabbin Land Trust located in Hardwick.

“The East Quabbin Land Trust has done some of that

heavy lifting for 20 years,” Della Penna said.

Della Penna said he lives eight feet from the rail trail in his town of Florence, and said having the trail will make a big change in the neighborhood.

“It will become the best walked park in your community,” he said.

Hawk has lived near the Gibbs Crossing segment of rail trail for about 15 years, and regularly utilizes the trail to access the town’s shopping centers, or to enjoy time in nature with his dog. Hawk, who is a quadriplegic, is grateful for the trail’s accessibility which allow him to be independent.

“What’s great about the rail trail is it’s joining the community together,” he said. “It’s something for future generations to enjoy.”

Bourcier and Hawk said

they invited the residents to the gathering to hear feedback about their proposal, including the opportunity to voice questions and concerns.

The proposed trail extension will connect from Robbins Road the area off Laurel Drive to South Street, crossing the South Street bridge, then continuing to Grenville Park where it will connect to the existing Church Street trail. The trail is also being developed and made accessible through Grenville Park thanks to a town meeting vote which allowed for the purchase of a tract of land adjacent to the park.

Bourcier said their proposal includes the construction of a bridge, and there are several possible locations to build it, including at a “paper road” known as

Riverside Street. The proposal also includes the purchase or acceptance of privately owned property in order to create access.

Bourcier said she is communicating with two property owners about the proposed trail extension.

She said the proposal also includes access to the back of the Mary Lane Hospital property, near the river, if the property owner allows it.

Bourcier said there are three possible locations to build a bridge across the Ware River from the Robbins Road end of the trail, with the first following the original railroad crossing to the south corner of Kansaki Specialty Papers, Inc. She said this location would require deeded rights to the waterfront section of the Kansaki property.

The second location goes

from the southside of the water treatment plant off Robbins Road to Cummings Road. Bourcier said there is a clear access point onto an unused, town-owned road that would then connect to the sewer line easement at Kansaki.

The third location starts at the northside of the water treatment plant to the Kansaki property and would require deeded rights.

Bourcier said she and Hawk are working to develop the proposal in order to apply for grants to pay for the project.

Feedback from residents

Many residents from Laurel Drive, Marjorie Street and Monroe Street attended the gathering to ask questions about the proposed trail extension, as well as voice concerns about traffic, emer-

gency access and the proximity of the trail to wetlands.

A Monroe Street resident said there is already increased traffic through the neighborhood to Memorial Field and Valley View Housing, and that speeding along the narrow road is a concern.

“The added traffic on the road would be bad,” the resident said.

Several Marjorie Street residents spoke about wildlife and the privacy they enjoy on their street.

One said she is “not against the trail” but she doesn’t want it in their yard.

Bourcier encouraged all in attendance to email her their feedback to continue the discussion. Bourcier can be reached at cinallen10@gmail.com.



BRIDGE OPTIONS

Option 1: Robbins Road to the south corner of Kansaki property. This would follow the original rail crossing. It would need some type of deeded rights to the waterfront section of the property. Move the existing fence back about 15 feet or more. Currently the fence may be blocking access to the sewer line easement to Laurel Drive.

Option 2: South side of Ware water treatment plant to Alice Road. This is a clear access point onto the town owned unused road. And then would join the sewer line easement on the east side with expanded deeded usage.

Option 3: North side of the Ware water treatment plant to Kansaki property. This would need some type of deeded rights to the waterfront section of the property. And then join the sewer line easement on the east side of the river with expanded deeded usage. Or have the Town of Ware purchase the property.