

TOWN of RIDGEFIELD – BOARD of SELECTMEN
PUBLIC HEARING – FEBRUARY 6, 2016

TOWN HALL/LARGE CONFERENCE ROOM – 10:00 A.M.

APPROVED MINUTES

These minutes are a general summary of the public hearing and are not intended to be a verbatim transcription.

In attendance: R. Marconi, R. Hebert, B. Manners, S. Zemo

Notice is hereby given that the Town of Ridgefield Board of Selectmen will hold a Public Hearing at 7:30 p.m. on February 17, 2016 at the Ridgefield Town Hall, 400 Main Street, Ridgefield, Connecticut, in the large conference room, to hear comment on the proposed license agreement between the Town of Ridgefield and Eversource which would allow bicycles on the rail trail.

Related documents for the license agreement are available for public inspection in the Office of the First Selectman and the Town Clerk and on the Town website.

R. Marconi called the Public Hearing to order at 10:00 a.m.

Chris Moomaw, 120 Prospect Street, spoke about his concern of liability for the Town.

Tom Elliott, 163 High Ridge Avenue, asked for the name of the Eversource contact and questioned the economic and environmental benefit of the introduction of bicycles to the rail trail. Could we limit bicycle use to exclude mountain bikes? The roads are not that dangerous; but also runners.

Mike Autuori, Florida Hill Road, spoke about the greenway; questions bikes. The abutting neighbors should be notified. Questions the needed modifications; it will change the aesthetics of the rail trail. Would port-a-johns be installed?

Jeff Lundberg, 45 Cooper Hill Road, stated he walks the trail and it gets very little use; is in favor of the plan.

Pete Nichols, 18 Parley Road, is a 50-year resident. The use of the rail trail is low; bikes will not hurt. On other trails it is not an issue; it will be safe. Feels it will be a benefit.

Anton Dieters, 19 Prospect Ridge, stated he is a daily user of the rail trail; is a member of Wolfpit Running Club. Pedestrians vs. cyclists—where is the petition that was signed by 110 people?

Sarah Katz, Limekiln Road, is a cyclist and a runner. The trail is underutilized. She is a mother who would like to have the opportunity for safe family bicycling. Similar trails in Westchester are safe; would like this to move forward for the kids in our Town.

Joseph Heyman, 7 Ketcham Road, stated he will not ride his bicycle in Ridgefield because it is dangerous. Mixed use works; look at other trails to see how it works. Lexington, MA to Boston trail is successful; property values along the trail increased. In favor.

Deb Povanelli, 44 Peaceable Street, stated allowing runners and bikers has positive economic benefits. Families are missing from the rail trail; read notes from her two children asking for a safe place to bike.

Kay Gelfman, 462 North Salem Road, (on the LINC committee) stated bikes can work. The neighbors have been contacted. All claims about wildlife, specifically turtles, can be addressed during the design. "Let's grow up and share."

Susan Baker, 163 High Ridge Avenue, spoke in opposition to the multi-use, citing the following concerns: no paving, walkers, runners, bikers—there are roads to ride on. Fuss & O'Neill - 1) wood / box turtle; 2) 18' wide? - concerned about filling & killing wetlands. Snow removal, buffers, ADA, liability insurance for the Town, tree planting, can the work be done in two years? -- all concerns. Would like to see in writing that there would not be any paving.

Dick Ball, 13 Jeffro Drive, is 100% against bikes. Has 300' on the trail; never received notice—would like to in the future. All neighbors should.

Robert Dione(?), concerned about environmental.

Mitchell Fink, 66 Grove Street, stated he rides on trails with bikes and runners and everyone seems to get along.

Mike Connelly, 34 Lost Mine Place, manages a bike shop. Mountain bikers will not use this trail. Trail plan offers a safe place for kids; walkers/runners damage trail as well.

George Bossis, 26 Old Wagon Road, spoke in favor. Roads are dangerous for children; "we are smart enough to make this work."

Kathleen Whitmore, 15 Saw Mill Hill Road, is a biker. Would not mountain bike on this trail; would like to have the opportunity to enjoy a slower ride. In favor.

Joe Doucet, 70 Pumping Station Road, need to consider aesthetics; in favor – understands the challenges but there should be compromises; we can figure this out.

Nancy Cofone, 19 Hermit Lane, not in favor; mushy during thaw; concerned about related liability for bikes.

Rob Orr, 61 Cooper Hill Road, is a walker/jogger. Likes the theory. Dog walkers are a problem; wash outs are an issue. There will be a need to regulate various uses; it is an etiquette issue.

Ryan Goldberg, Six Sunset Hill Road, the trail is mushy; it should be paved.

Pat Sesto, 115 Nod Hill Road, emphasized the importance of the trail connecting to the Norwalk River Valley Trail. Has confidence that the design can work. Charrette? Read from NRVF; wetlands professional; economic development opportunity; cars off the road.

Peter Koppen, 120 Prospect Street, asked why are the rights of current users not being considered? What about the rights of the disabled?

Paul Roche, 729 North Salem Road, talked about the use of the trail around Parks & Recreation. A 2003 P&R survey showed 89% wanted safe biking trail for family recreation.

Chris Moomaw, questioned Section 7-Liability and Section 23 of the agreement. Stated cyclists do not obey laws; there is an enormous amount of liability adding bikers. Told two personal stories of auto/bike accidents.

Meg Collins, (20 Highview Drive?), is a cycling official. Riders must obey the 3' rule. More signage will have to be installed.

Jacqui Dowd, 57 Shadow Lane, Co-chairperson of Committee, reviewed questions asked; gave general background. Stated co-use works all over the state on similar rail trails. This would offer a resource for more people to use and enjoy; it is an EDC opportunity.

Michael Autuori, spoke to summarize: 1) What work has to take place; 2) Need to contact abutting neighbors

Benjamin Hume, 107 Cooper Road, spoke in favor.

Joseph

Tom Elliott asked that the liability be reviewed again in the agreement.

Anton Dieters offered the idea that families can go to East Ridge parking lot with their children and set up cones for biking.

Public Hearing closed at 11:57 am.