

Meeting Minutes of the River Trail Commission
(Towns of Cloverland, St. Germain and the City of Eagle River)
November 6, 2023 4:00 PM
Eagle River City Hall 525 E Maple St, Eagle River, WI

1. Meeting called to order at 4:00 PM public present included:

Carlton Schroeder - (GHT Sugar Camp)	Richard Leinenkugel - Washington
Jeff & Ann Currie - Cloverland	Todd Biermen – Vilas Park & Rec
Francine Gough - Cloverland Supervisor	Mike Robillard - Zoom
Gary Meister - GHT	Fred Williston - Zoom
Karen Margelofsky - Eagle River Revitalization	Joe Laux – Eagle River
Holly & Tom Tomlanovitch - Washington	Joe Panci – Eagle River

2. Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

3. Meeting Posting was verified for all 3 participating municipalities.

4. Roll Call - **Jim Swenson** - Chairman, **Joe Spitz** - Cloverland, **Ron Kressin**- present Quorum Present.

5. No objections were made to taking the agenda in any order at the discretion of Chairman

6. Kressin motioned to approve the July20, 2023 meeting minutes, Spitz seconded. Board vote approved the minutes.

7.

Carlton Schroeder reported on the evaluation of alternative routes. There were several handouts to represent the findings and recommendations. The three were dubbed: **Central** (original proposal), **North** and **South**. All included the same original route from St. Germain to Sunset Road that follows the river. All were based on the trail being off the roadways.

Both the Central and South routes both still require the bridge over the WI river at the “Honey Bear”. A smaller bridge along Adams St. would be required for a river crossing by the North trail. The North trail is 3.5 miles longer than Central, the South is 1 mile longer. A summary sheet summarized the findings and decision elements based on the data in a detailed spreadsheet that was developed based on the GIS Mapping system by Carlton Schroeder and Mike Maierle (both retired civil engineers) and Ann Currie. This work included determining distances, grades, numbers of residential properties within a half mile band on either side of all three routes, businesses passed, and private property easements required (and owners names) and distance through wetlands. The South route includes 0.52 miles in Onieda county. The North route has 1.0 miles of the route through wetlands while the South route includes 1.2 miles. The same section of the Central doesn't cross any. Boardwalk costs about \$200/foot (Carlton's recollection) which is much more than cost of paved trail and sometimes requires replacing to decking boards for “cupping”. Boulder junction recently installed composite lumber (more expensive than pressure treat). Mike Robillard (Three Eagle Trail) significant footage of boardwalk an noted that it had not been significant to maintain but that it is more vulnerable to major damage from things like tree falls etc..

The south trail along the power corridor has been given easement for the power company but would require both the power company and the owners to grant easements for the pedestrian/bike trail to share that space. North Route it may be necessary for some private easements where right of way narrows on east end of G and similarly on Adams St. but that will take an engineering study.

Kressin stated that he had discussions with Jerry Burkett and they feel that ER has been going about this a little bit the wrong way regarding their position on the proposed trail. They are fine with it was proposed originally (Central) within their own jurisdiction, but that they were wrong voicing disapproval based on what happens with the trail location within in another municipality. They have no right to say anything about what is done in Cloverland or Lincoln. Whatever municipalities approve within their boundaries is up to them, Eagle River will go along with it. He said that he would like to see it get built and that the alternates are going to be more expensive.

Meister said that it is important for ER to formally change their “official position on this” as reflected above, to

help with getting support for the Central route over alternative routes.

Ginner suggested that these alternate route findings be presented in the next council meeting and that they could consider rescinding their previous motion in favor of one that better reflected their stance after seeing these studies.

Spitz agreed to take this data to the Cloverland board regarding the alternates study. He agreed to also ask the board to use more of the same approach as voiced by Kressin and restate its position, avoiding statements conditional on what happens outside of its jurisdiction.

Motion made by Swenson to agree that: "The River Trail Commission supports the "Central Route" as the preferred route for the River Trail and is looking for corresponding support from the municipalities involved in the Commission." Seconded by Spitz. Motion passed unanimously.

We discussed the DOT's concern and emphasis on improving safety for "Vulnerable Road Users" (pedestrians, bike users) so having the segments off road is favorable rather than including the actual roadways as part of the trail. A discussion next centered on the paradox that inhibits this from happening via the State Municipal Agreements they require to use of their Right of Way.

Joe Laux offered some historical perspective. After the "lighting conflict" with Lincoln along Hwy 45, the DOT changed the form of their SMA as the previous language didn't allow them to withhold funds from the municipalities state road funding assistance to cover what they considered a "broken agreement". Trying to recover the cost of the street lighting they funded, when the power was turned off, they found out that they could not legally do it by withholding road funding assistance. Related situation came into play in ER when the DOT was re-paving Pine St (Hwy 45). They were negotiating sidewalks from the Bridge St intersection all the way to the Shell station. They had the language added that if DOT was unhappy with the way ER was taking care of the sidewalks put in as part of the highway rebuild, that they would be allowed to hire a contractor of their choice and bill the city to have it done as they saw fitting. There was no way to appeal the DOT action other than to appear before a committee of legislators on the one day allowed per year along with any private citizen. This conflict happened in Three Lakes as well. What is in the specific SMA language is critical. At a standoff on the sidewalk installation, ER told them they didn't want them put in as part of the project. A letter to the editor in ER embarrassed the DOT approach enough that they revised the agreement, going back to wording from 1972.

Laux said that Lincoln has been honest, consistent and upfront from the beginning of the trail discussion. They want nothing to do with it in any way shape or form. Laux doesn't see them changing so he supports the northern route. He stated he sees no other way around Lincoln.

Need to overcome these obstacles with DOT by formally addressing with DOT:

- Is there \$50K hanging over Lincoln's head from the Light incident?
- Could we use ATV over current Honey Bear Bridge (DOT) as well as Snowmobile
- An agreement that we could negotiate to offer to our Munis to get a safe route
- Is TAP funding contingent on having a true connection "approved" into ER
- Also, for the towns, regarding grant issues, how are they going to be held harmless if the grant doesn't come through (? Cost overruns, red tape, disagreements on completion etc.)
- Suggestion to see if Bill Marshall would attend as an observer/participant to the meeting.

If North route were chosen, we really need to assure that Cloverland will allow use of ROW all along Sunset. It would need to be on the south/west side of the road as the opposite side is loaded with underground power, telephone and internet utilities.

10 Next meeting date was not established at this meeting (tbd).

11. Meeting adjourned at 5:21 PM