

**SOMERSWORTH RAIL ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**MINUTES OF MEETING**  
**MAY 13, 2014**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Dale Sprague, Chair, Martin Pepin, Joanne Pepin, Brian Caple, Lara Willard, Jacqueline Hanlon and Paul Robidas.  
**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Travis Heon and Christien DuBois.  
**STAFF PRESENT:** Dave Sharples, Director of Planning and Community Development and Darcy Moore, Code/Assessing Clerk.

The meeting was called to order at 4:02 pm.

**1) APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF APRIL 15, 2014.**

**Motion:** Robidas moved to approve the minutes of the meeting of April 15, 2014

Seconded by Sharples. Motion carried with a unanimous 8-0 vote.

**2) NEW BUSINESS**

Chairman Sprague introduced Tony Donovan, President of the Maine Rail Transit Coalition (MRTC LLC) and the presentation that Donovan was giving. Sprague also recognized several audience members in attendance, Senator David Watters, City of Rochester Councilor Sandy Keans and City of Somersworth Councilors Brian Tapscott and Jennifer Soldati.

Tony Donovan introduced himself and his associate Paul Weiss of the MRTC. Donovan stated that the MRTC is seeking to expand passenger rail, other than the Downeaster, to communities. Donovan mentioned our existing train station, now a restaurant, as a great train station. He also mentioned that this rail project is all about grassroots community development.

Donovan began the presentation. On slide 1, Donovan spoke about the existing rail system and how it is in our backyards. He stated that slide 2 is an example of a project he was involved in that expanded the Downeaster train, which ran from Boston to Portland, to Brunswick. He stated this project started with the formation of a committee and that this project revitalized the Brunswick downtown area. Slide 4 showed a saying that Donovan explained, FED's, ED's and MED's. He stated that this saying is what makes rail projects work.

Donovan stated that there is a report, the Smart Growth Mobility Project, that should be downloaded and looked at for corridor building. He explained the TIGER grant (Transportation Investment to Generate Economic Recovery grant) as a critical source for funding transportation and planning grants. On slide 5, he stated that it is critical to know economic and environmental impact of rail systems on the community.

The Committee took a 5 minute recess.

Donovan showed slide 6 and went to Google Earth. He showed a ¼ mile radius. This shows as far a person will walk from the station before they will use motorized transportation. He talked about the importance of mobility systems in place from the train station.

Robidas asked if there is ever competition on the lines where they want you to use their lines. Donovan said he didn't want to speak for the North Coast, but he thinks the "privates" are close to thinking of doing this.

Donovan stated from slide 7 that walkability equals livability, which is vital for these projects. On slide 9, he stated that cost to improve railways is about \$1,000,000 per mile and only needs to be rebuilt every 100 years. In comparison roadways cost \$1,000,000 per lane mile and must be rebuilt every 10 years.

Sprague asked about this different type of rail system. Paul Weiss, with MRTC, stated these new trains are hybrid motor cars. He stated they are battery powered upon start and move up to full speed quickly. They run on the hybrid diesel motor while in between stations. They have the ability to be fully electrified and are made in Ottawa, Canada. They hold about 100 passengers per unit and the units can be expanded.

Audience member questioned the capital cost. Weiss stated they cost \$4.5 million per rail unit. He stated that these rail stations are the solution to bringing complete economic development along with transportation.

Donovan showed a slide with railway classifications and said the goal would be to bring Somersworth railways to a Class 4.

Caple asked if the railway that is in place now is an advantage to attract outside investment. Donovan stated that it absolutely is a great advantage.

Sprague stated it starts locally and he has had other communities express interest in being involved with this project. He stated that before they are involved he would like to focus on a feasibility study. He envisions using UNH as an advantage and the different mill buildings in surrounding communities. He stated he believes the biggest competition in getting State funding is the Capital quota. Donovan stated there are a lot of opportunities everywhere and significant Federal money to do it.

Weiss stated that once funding was in place it took 2 years to service for the Brunswick project.

Senator Watters stated that he is persuaded and he thinks that this is an extraordinary economic benefit and is doable. He stated that he is in favor of the endeavor.

Willard questioned whether or not the current owners of the railways would be in opposition to this project. Donovan stated that some of the companies could provide significant roadblocks to the project.

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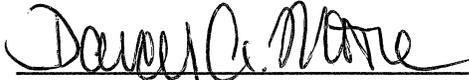
Sprague asked what the next step is. Donovan stated the need to decide if this is what the City is moving forward with and then read the Smart Growth Mobility Report.

Robidas motioned to adjourn.

Seconded by Martin Pepin. Motion carried with a unanimous 8-0 vote.

Meeting adjourned at 5:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted:



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Darcy Moore, Code/Assessing Clerk  
Somersworth Rail Advisory Committee

