

**MEETING NOTES**  
**MERRITT PARKWAY TRAIL MEETING**

Thursday, May 6, 2004  
SWRPA Offices  
Stamford  
11:00 AM

**ATTENDANCE**

Franklin Bloomer, Greenwich Safe Cycling; Robin Stein, Stamford Land Use Bureau; Cheryl Dunson, LWV-Greenwich; Linda Hoza, RPA; Sue Prosi, SWRPA; Ray Rauth, Sound Cyclists; Jane Waugh, Shippan Point Garden Club & Stamford Tree Foundation

**MEMBERSHIP—UPDATE**

New Members:

Fairfield Bridle Trail Association

New Advisory members:

Town of Trumbull, Raymond Baldwin, Jr., First Selectman

City of Bridgeport, John M. Fabrizi, Mayor

Town of Westport, Diane Farrel, First Selectwoman

Town of Darien, Evonne Kline, First Selectwoman

City of Norwalk, Alex A. Knopp, Mayor

Town of Greenwich, James Lash, First Selectman

Town of New Canaan, Judy A. Neville, First Selectwoman

New Supporters:

Conservation Commission, Town of Greenwich

Suggestions for MPTA Membership:

- Ms. Prosi suggested we get more state and local health organizations involved in the Alliance.
- Mr. Stein suggested we start by contacting Dr. Johnny Lee, Director, Stamford Health Department

**FUNDING—UPDATE**

Ms. Hoza reported that the campaign to raise matching contributions for the Alex G. Nason Foundation \$10,000 Challenge Grant raised \$11, 915, bringing the total to date to \$21, 915. She thanked Mr. Bloomer for sharing the Greenwich Safe Cycling membership list which was instrumental in the success of the fund drive. She said the Alliance was also most grateful for a very generous donation from Paul Newman and delighted to have his support for the Merritt trail.

## MPTA WEBSITE

Just a reminder that you can access the Alliance website now from the RPA website [www.rpa.org](http://www.rpa.org) by clicking on the Merritt Parkway Trail Alliance logo on RPA's main page. Or you can go directly to the website at [www.merrittalliance.org](http://www.merrittalliance.org)

## MPTA FAQ SHEET

Ms. Hoza passed out copies of the new FAQ sheet, a tri-folded document with a tear-off membership form.

Discussion:

- Ms. Waugh suggested that the FAQ should include the new MPTA logo. (This has been done.)
- Mr. Stein suggested that the health benefits of a Merritt trail are enormously important and should be a separate Q and A rather than included under "Why should we support a trail?" (This change has been made.)
- Mr. Rauth requested 50 copies of the new FAQ to take to meetings and suggested that others might want to do the same. **\*Please contact Ms. Hoza if you would like copies of the new FAQ.**
- It was suggested that copies of the FAQ should be placed in libraries, grocery stores, bicycle shops and other public places. (This will be done)

## CONNDOT AND THE ROW

Ms. Hoza reported that the Department of Transportation has a new commissioner, Stephen Korda, former head of Bradley Airport. She asked for ideas on how to approach him about the Merritt trail and using the ROW. Ms. Prosi suggested that first the Alliance should write to Carl Bard and get an update on ConnDot's effort to survey stakeholders on the use of the ROW for a trail.

## OUTREACH INITIATIVE

Ms. Hoza reported that she and Mr. Atkin had met with most mayors and first selectmen of towns and cities along and near the parkway. She said support for the Merritt trail was almost unanimous. The only negative response came from the first selectman in Fairfield, Ken Flatto, who, none the less, agreed not to oppose the demonstration segment in Stamford, though he declined to sign a statement to that affect.

Meetings with Easton, Monroe and Wilton are slated for the near future as well as public meeting in most of the towns and cities, meetings with state legislators and meetings with businesses along the Parkway.

### Discussion

The following recommendations were made to turn Fairfield into a trail supporter:

- Ask Fairfield citizens who support the trail to write letters to Mr. Flatto (with a copy to local newspapers) telling him you support the trail. **Members of our steering living in Fairfield -- Appalachian Mountain Club, Sierra Club, Sound Cyclists, CT Bicycle Alliance, Trust for Public Land, etc. –your efforts would be especially appreciated. (sample letter attached)**
- Write op-ed pieces
- Reach out to riding clubs. (This has been done and Fairfield Bridle Trail Association is our newest member! Thank you Dan Burhans.)
- Get other Fairfield groups to become Alliance members—bike shops, health organizations, health clubs, churches, neighborhood groups, etc.

## THANK YOU

The Alliance would like to take this opportunity to thank **Franklin Bloomer, Gail Christie, Brian Gossler, Clyde Gourley, Deborah Lewis, Jim McConnon, Jeff Munk, Ray Rauth, and Sheila Rosenthal** for attending meetings with the chief elected official in each of their respective towns. Having a local supporter at the meetings was important and we appreciate the time everyone took to make this outreach effort a success.

## FAIRFIELD COUNTRY TRAILS

Ms. Hoza has assembled an inventory of the major walking, hiking, biking and riding trails in Fairfield County which she distributed at the meeting. **(It you would like a copy, please contact Ms. Hoza.)** The list is not comprehensive but does include all major trails. If anyone is aware of a missing trail resource for biking or hiking, please contact Ms. Hoza so she can add the information.

## NORWALK CONFERENCE

Mr. Rauth reported that the Greenways conference in Norwalk was well attended and very informative. He said the highlights of the event were:

- Mayor Knopp gave an update on Norwalk's efforts to make the city a bicycle and pedestrian friendly community
- Bill O'Neill, East Coast Greenway Alliance and Ct Greenways Council described existing New England and Connecticut greenways and trails and their benefits
- Dick Whitehouse, President, Connecticut Forest and Parks Association talked about different types of Greenways and Trails throughout the country
- John Atkin and Linda Hoza spoke about Fairfield County trails, both existing and planned, and Ms. Hoza distributed the inventory of Fairfield County trails.

## CT GREENWAYS COUNCIL

Ms. Hoza attended the April 8<sup>th</sup> meeting of the CT Greenways Council and made the following report:

- Leslie Lewis presented the draft State Trail Plan and asked for comments by the end of May. **(If you would like a copy, please contact Ms. Hoza.)**
- Greenway Week was discussed and plans were made to hold an event and an awards ceremony.
- Department of Environmental Protection is holding regional mapping sessions to inventory trails and greenways to envision future linkages. The information will be put into GIS format and used to determine regional priority for recreation and conservation. A session is planned for Fairfield County.
- The Greenways Council is working with Lile Gibbons, Mary Mushinsky and Bob Duff to establish a legislative greenway caucus.

## **FALL EVENT**

Ms. Hoza asked for ideas and volunteers for a fall outreach event to be held at the Italian Center in Stamford. Mr. Bloomer, Ms. Dunson, Mr. Rauth and Ms. Waugh agreed to participate on the subcommittee. Ms. Dunson offered to contact several associates with PR and event planning skills who might be willing to share their knowledge with the Alliance.

Some suggestions for the event were:

- Antique car exhibit (Ms. Waugh will check into this)
- Antique bicycle exhibit (Mr. Bloomer will check into this)
- Wine and cheese tasting
- Trail walks
- Speakers –Craig DellaPenna was suggested
- Segway demonstration

**We need YOU! If you would like to serve on the Event Planning Subcommittee , please email Linda Hoza.**

## **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 1:15