

North Country Scenic Byways Council
Meeting Minutes
November 16th, 2010

Attendees: Rob Nadler (Albany), Jack Rose (Albany), Dick Hamilton (Littleton), Chris Thayer (AMC), Ken Allen (USFS), Dean Eastman (NH DOT), Jayne O'Connor (WMA), and Ed Betz (Whitefield).
Phone: Frumie Selchen (Arts Alliance of Northern NH) and Betsey Harding (Jackson)
Staff: Mary Deppe (NCC)

Welcomes & Introductions

The meeting began at 12:30 at the NCC offices in Bethlehem.

Minutes

The group reviewed the minutes from the July 13th meeting and there were no comments. Mary explained that once there are bylaws in place it will make more sense to formally adopt the minutes.

Bylaws

Mary Deppe explained to the group that she had developed a draft set of bylaws for the North Country Scenic Byways Council. The old set of bylaws and the bylaws from the Connecticut River Scenic Byway were used as templates.

It was suggested that the geographic area be described in the bylaws.

There was some discussion about membership and who should be invited to participate. There was some agreement that if every town participates then it might end up being too large of a committee to get anything done. That brought up the question of how many people should be on the committee.

Betsey Harding suggested that we limit it to people that have the interest of the region at heart and want to improve access to the region. It is not beneficial to have members with a single interest.

Dick Hamilton added that a lot applications come in that are at the interest of one group or area.

Dean Eastman suggested that selectboards appoint members to the byways committee. That way the member has the benefit of the town in mind.

Ken Allen suggested that the frequency of membership actually participating could play a role in identifying who the real members are. Members need to come to meetings, participate and be available. Also, if a member only comes to meetings when letters of intent are reviewed

and scored, then it could be an indicator that they do not have the best interest of the byways in mind.

Frumie Selchen stated that some of things listed under roles are outdated. Is that really what we are saying we are going to do? Mary Deppe responded that the roles were taken directly from the last set of bylaws and the purpose of updating them is now is to decide what this committee is going to do in the future.

Chris Thayer asked for a clarification from Dean Eastman regarding whether or not all of the Byways Councils have bylaws. Dean responded yes.

Chris asked the group if we are more of a committee than a council. A council seems to be more of a “well established” group. Should this be more of a subcommittee of the NCC Transportation Advisory Committee?

Someone asked if NCC can use other transportation funding to run this committee.

Mary Deppe explained that she is not sure if this could be funded under UPWP and included in the scope of work. Dean Eastman said he thinks other RPC’s are getting funding for this through their UPWP contracts.

Dean Eastman said that in the future, ideally this group would provide guidance to other byways groups in the region, when they are eventually formed.

Dean explained the history of the byways system. If no one is interested in taking a leadership role for the other byways, then they will eventually lose their designation.

Dick, what effect would that have on opening up byways for development? Dean commented that it shouldn’t have too much effect on that. He said that it really matters what the people of the community want.

Jayne O’Connor stated that under purposes → number 3, the Kanc should be mentioned specifically in this document.

She also questioned what “promotion” means under the role of membership category? This group typically hasn’t done much promotion if any.

Rob Nadler commented that some of the state maps and other byways maps use different names for the byways. This should be consistent.

Jayne added that there needs to be regular signs made up and installed to make sure people know they are on the byway, rather than just have them at either end. The Connecticut River Byway has that. Dean explained that it is the role of the committee to be responsible for purchasing signs and coordinating with DOT and USFS to have them installed. Could put

together grant for it and get 80% of it paid for. He also added that we do the have option to ask prison to make them at reasonable price. He stated that it does make sense from a marketing perspective to tie things together with signage.

Ken Allen said that perhaps this group should “assist” in activities rather than make them happen. For instance Jayne’s group develops materials and this group can provide input on them.

Chris Thayer said that it is not realistic to reach out to all communities in the region and ask them to form a committee. Dean Eastman said that he will be doing that outreach and asking the other areas to form byways committees.

Jayne suggested that state maps should list the byways on them. Dean said that in the future we could have websites so people can build their own maps with whatever layers they want on them.

Mary Deppe noted how NCC is sort of left out of document as the goal is for this group to eventually sustain itself and run itself. Jayne suggested that other organizations should be mentioned as providing assistance, not just NCC and WMA.

Scenic Byways Program Updates

Project Updates:

Saco Lake Project: Dean Eastman said that the project is moving forward. The plan hasn’t changed since last time we met. Engineering is planned for the winter and the project will begin in the summer.

Mt. Washington Overlook: Dean Eastman explained that the Mount Washington Overlook is officially closed and DOT is going to start over. DOT is putting in application because the cost of the project is now twice than the funding that they had for it. There were drainage and parking issues and a wall was needed to support the rail bed. DOT reached out to the hotel and they are interested in the project but not interested in being a financial sponsor. From safety perspective it’s a great project. There isn’t really any room to redesign the project. It’s going to be closer to a \$1 million project rather than the \$450,000 that we originally thought.

Chris Thayer asked if receiving support for this project going to help move it forward. Support from hotel, communities, etc? Dean said that we definitely need public support.

There was some discussion about if it would be beneficial to move it to the forest service land. Ken Allen explained that no, it would not be beneficial to the public to change public land to a parking lot.

Ken mentioned that this project involves a land swap with the hotel and the state. The USFS provides easements to the NH for the good of the public and was willing to provide the easement for this project. If the project changes, then USFS will have to take a second look at providing the easement.

2011 Grant Rounds Updates

Dean Eastman gave an update on the 2011 grant round. Letters of intent for projects in 2011 are open. They are non-binding, don't you do not have to apply if you submit a letter of intent. There will be a mandatory workshop and a 20% match is required. You don't have to have a CMP in place and in fact could apply for money for a CMP or to become a National Byway. Individuals or groups will have the opportunity to come in and present their projects to the State committee. The state committee will review and rank projects, but funding is ultimately decided by Federal Highways. The application is detailed and close to 20 pages long. Applicants need to have a detailed overhead rate and budget. The workshop will help with the expectations of the application and the contracts. December 1st letters of intent due. Dean stated that he is happy to receive letters by email but will need a hard copy with a signature too. We are still waiting for funding announcements for 2010. Probably won't open 2011 grant round until those announcements are made.

Dean suggested spending some time on www.bywaysonline.org now and not waiting until the grant round is open.

Ken explained that the letters of intent are a great benefit to anyone that is applying. It makes you think about it much earlier than you would if you wait until grant period is open. He suggested thinking about it as if you are looking for an investor. Make a good case about where it is, what it is, why it's so important, and the budget. No one will give you a dime unless you specifically outline what the grant would pay for. He also said that it sometimes makes sense, especially for larger grants, to sit through a process for a year, participate in the process, and start bouncing ideas around a year early. Then you have your ducks in a row and it will set you up for success. It has to compete on a national level so it's important to have a strong application.

Dean said that you can ask him for help, but the application is online and has detailed instructions. Betsey asked if NCC can be a resource to help develop applications. Mary Deppe said that does not really have the information or resources to be able to provide that assistance. Jayne said that assistance should be coming from DOT directly. Dean will help and offer as much assistance as he can.

Dean stated that communities need to have the match, have a warrant article, and set the funding aside in a separate account.

Mary Deppe asked Dean what was expected from this committee regarding the letters of intent. Dean said that he is asking this committee to review the letters of intent and say whether or not they support it. You can make recommendations, say if it's a good project, and suggest ways for it to improve. You do not necessarily need to choose a priority for the region. If one stands above the rest then it's okay to say that.

Rob Nadler asked who is supposed to come up with the match if someone wanted to develop a guidebook. Dean said that it is the responsibility of the application. Rob asked if NCC could pay for the match. Mary Deppe said that NCC does not have the resources to provide made for an applicant's project. Dean also added that it is better to develop web materials because printed materials get outdated, need to be distributed, etc. Jayne said that promotion wise, WMA tries to do nothing with the grant program because you can't do the project for 18-20 months. Maybe the state promotional budget could be used to develop something for the entire state that talks about all of the byways.

Jayne added that WMA will always take suggestions about their materials for improvements.

Dean mentioned that he would like to develop website like the one for tourism (which isn't part of a state site) to have links to all byways with great pictures. This will help travelers and people that are doing projects.

Frumie added that she is working on virtual trail that will follow along the byways route. She is not sure how or if this committee would like to be involved, but it would be great if there were some type of involvement.

Dean said that it would be great to have input on the letters of intent from this group by December 15th. Mary will send out letters to group once she gets them from Dean, ask group to review and email comments, and then set up a phone conference to discuss. Mary will draft a letter to DOT, send to committee for review, and send to DOT. This group will use the same list of considerations that was used in the last grant round since no changes were mentioned.

Betsey asked if it is clear in the instructions about all the things that we just discussed regarding the workshop, etc. Mary Deppe said that Dean provides all of that information to applicants. She also stated that the workshop really helps applicants with the application process. Betsey suggested sending an email to towns with information about the workshops, deadlines etc.

Ken stated that the process isn't really that difficult, there are just a lot of steps and it's hard to find the time to address them all properly.

Future meeting dates:

The next meeting date will be scheduled during the conference call.

Mary will set up a conference call on December 14th.

Minutes written by Mary Deppe
11/23/10

Minutes Approved 11/22/11