

North Country Scenic Byways Council
Meeting Minutes
July 22nd, 2008

Attendees: Kenneth Allen (USFS), Chris Thayer (AMC), Jim Karmozyn (HEB Engineering)
Jayne O'Connor (WMAA), Frumie Selchen (AANNH), Cynthia Briggs, and Betsey
Harding.
Guests: Dean Eastman (NHDOT)
Staff: Mary Deppe (NCC)

Welcomes & Introductions

The meeting began at 10:00 at the AMC Highland Center. Everyone around the table introduced themselves.

Scenic Byways Program Updates

Mr. Eastman explained that DOT and FHWA are still in the process of reviewing the 19 NH Scenic Byways projects that are currently open and figuring out which ones need to be closed out, approved by G&C or resume work. The goal is to close out projects that are done so that organizations can move on and DOT and FHWA can deal with them internally. Eastman explained that OEP used to administer the program, but DOT and FHWA were ultimately responsible for what happened with the money and projects.

There was some discussion about the Kancamagus Scenic Byway. The group agreed that the Kanc was designated first, and later on the entire loop (White Mountain Trail) was designated. Eastman mentioned that the Corridor Management Plan for the Kanc should be separate from that of the White Mountain Trail.

There was some discussion about who uses the byways and where are they going to and coming from? Eastman said that DOT would like to gather information about this and put it on the DOT website. There was also some discussion about how in the future, there will be more checks and balances regarding the use of Scenic Byways funding; for instance, grantees will be required to comply with Davis-Bacon wage rates and award contracts to the lowest qualified bidder. Architects will have to sign off on all bills in order to be reimbursed for construction or other projects. Since there is a 20% match required, for every bill submitted for \$100, DOT will return \$80. Eastman also mentioned that if you get funding for a project, and costs go up, you are going to need to find the additional funding elsewhere, because DOT will not provide more than what has been approved.

**Eastman also mentioned that if an applicant has more than 20% match, there is a greater chance that the funding will be awarded (provided that it meets all of the requirements.) He also encouraged everyone at the table to attend one of the Municipal Managed Contracts Workshop, since it will make you more familiar with the new agreements that will be used.

There was some discussion about overlook clearings. Eastman explained that overlooks can only be clearing once with Scenic Byway funding, because after that time it is considered maintenance and is no longer eligible. In District 1, Greg Placy has some money in his annual budget for clearing overlooks. Eastman mentioned that hiring a project manager that is an engineer or a contractor will be helpful so that they can sign off on various invoices and work orders.

There was some discussion by the group about how there should be some type of criteria developed for the art display at the Intervale overlook. There are temporary exhibits allowed until the final project is ready.

Eastman encouraged applicants whose projects were not awarded funding in the last round to re-apply. He also explained that once projects are funded, during the process of hiring for construction, low bids can be thrown out if they do not fully meet the criteria or needs of the project. If specs are included, then low bids can be eliminated that do not meet the spec.

Betsey Harding suggested that the group take a tour of the byway to see what we have and what we need. The group had planned on doing this last year, but then the funding was pulled. Eastman agreed that it makes sense for the group to travel and view the projects along the byway and to tie in marketing efforts with the Connecticut River Byway.

Jayne O'Connor explained that White Mountains Attractions is in the final stages of developing maps of the White Mountain Trail and the Kanc. She explained that it also connects with the Connecticut River Byway. The map does not show the entire Connecticut River Byway, but it at least lets you know that it is there and it can be easily accessed if you are in the area of the WMT and the Kanc.

There was some discussion about signage along the Connecticut River Byway, specifically at the Bath Village Store. Eastman asked the group to speak with him first before getting involved in any type of signage issues, as there are a number of restrictions.

Kenneth Allen discussed the Rocky Gorge Site and explained that the US Forest Service partnered with NHDOT on this re-vegetation project. Allen explained that the project was moved from Annis Field. Eastman stated that under normal circumstances this would have become a new project, but it was a special situation since the USFS and NHDOT were partners.

The group reviewed a number of projects on the status list. Eastman suggested that organizations that have funded projects should review the projects and see what still fits/what needs to be done and amend the projects. He explained that there will be no additional funding provided for projects that have already been approved. Descriptions of the projects can be found at www.bywayonline.org.

North Country Council will take a look at some of the contracts that are still open and see where the issue is with closing them out.

Other Issues

Jayne handed out a card with a link to an audio tour and map that will be available on the WMA website. The site will show what people need to pre-plan and what they will need once they get to the byways.

Chris Thayer volunteered to research other volunteer groups, how they fund their operations, membership, leadership, etc.

There was a discussion about how the role of this group is to focus on the National Scenic Byways; the White Mountain Trail and the Kancamagus.

Next Meeting

Jayne O'Connor volunteered to host the next meeting at White Mountains Attractions in Lincoln. Mary Deppe explained that as the meetings rotate locations, hopefully the legwork for the meetings will too (i.e. preparing the agendas, handouts, minutes, etc.) The date will be announced in the future.

Minutes Submitted by:

Mary Deppe

8/14/08