

Meeting Minutes of the River Trail Commission

(Towns of Cloverland, St. Germain and the City of Eagle River)

Dec.16, 2021 4:00 PM

Eagle River City Hall, 525 E. Maple St. Eagle River 54521

Also available via Zoom

1. Meeting called to order 4:00 PM Public Present included:

Gary Meister (GM) - Eagle River, Carlton Schroeder, Jeff and Ann Currie (JC)- Cloverland, Dan Kramer (Lincoln), Fritz Laeser, Jim Meiers (Lincoln), Francine Gough (FG) -Supv. Cloverland, Tim Wright - Washington, Robin Ginner Eagle River City Administrator, Steve Favorite- Cloverland

2. Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

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

4. Roll Call - Present: Ron Kressin (RK), Joe Spitz (JJS), Jim Swenson (JS) - Chairman. Quorum Present.

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

6. Minutes from the Nov. 11, 2021 meeting minutes of the RTC had been sent out prior to the meeting. JS moved to approve the minutes, JJS seconded the motion. Board vote approved the minutes.

7. Moved directly to item 8.

8. JC discussed the main purpose of this meeting was to discuss the TAP grant application for the bridge over the Wisconsin River near the Honey Bear restaurant that is due for submission on Jan. 28,2022. He referenced the recent Vilas County Forestry committee meeting earlier in the month where Todd Bierman brought up the bridge grant to the committee for discussion. There was general support for the grant and there seemed to be agreement that the County could be willing to “own” the bridge in the grant and that the Snowmobile Club (Rusty Wolf was present) might be able to go for a 20% grant for sponsorship of the joint, seasonal snowmobile-bike/pedestrian use bridge. In that meeting, Holly Tomlavich, Chairman, made it clear in the discussion that the support of the bridge would require that it be “multi-use” like the Mud Creek bridge she sponsored previously on Otter Creek, that allows for other motorized use as well as these uses.

A long discussion ensued as to how this could be done after research by several involved.

1. The current use of the Hwy 70 bridge could be relieved of snowmobiles and the ATV/UTV’s could use the highway bridge. State statute that allows for County and a Township to pass ordinances to use the highway bridge for ATV/UTV traffic if it is less than 1000 ft, usage without petitioning the DOT. This would mean that getting on the bridge at the Honey Bear, they could travel for a total distance of 1000’ on the road (but this wouldn’t get them to Cloverland’s, Zeman Road which is currently approved for A/UTV traffic). So they would have to gain private ROW for that distance or petition the State DOT for use of HWY 70 ROW for the distance from the bridge to Zeman Rd. or work with the DOT to extend the highway use to Zeman Road (see item 3. below)

2. The grant could go forward and try to use an exemption for motorized traffic in State Statutes section 23.33 that allows for limited use state Highway or DOT ROW for use of motorized vehicles for short distances for “trail crossings, 90 degree dog legs, and crossing structures (bridges). See: <https://wisconsindot.gov/Pages/doing-bus/real-estate/permits/atv-utv.aspx>

3. Jim Swenson said that the DOT recently approved ATV use of Hwy 70 from Straightaway Road all the way to Birchwood drive after a traffic study. That required that speed limit on the highway be changed to 35 mph and they will allow it. This use should begin this 2022 spring after the Highway department completes the required signage.

It was decided that to facilitate the TAP grant that there should be a meeting held face to face with Jim Swenson, Jeff Currie, Holly Tomlavich, Todd Bierman, Rusty Wolf to get on the same page with them before the next Forestry committee meeting on Jan. 4. This to allow that they could get approval for a “buy in” on supporting the TAP grant as “owners” and what would satisfy the expectation to make it a “multi-use” crossing.

There was also discussion mentioned by GHT for the commission to consider getting other parties to possibly fund a “future prep” for an A/UTV bridge by having the bridge abutments and the two piers in the river to be wide enough to accommodate another 12’ wide parallel structure for A/UTV use alongside the bike/ped /snow deck structure. Jim Swenson agreed to approach the A/UTV organization to discuss this possibility. It was noted that on the east side of this bridge is a possible connection to the Onieda County A/UTV trail system on County H.

9. Letters and communication. None

Meeting Minutes of the River Trail Commission

(Towns of Cloverland, St. Germain and the City of Eagle River)

Dec.16, 2021 4:00 PM

Eagle River City Hall, 525 E. Maple St. Eagle River 54521

Also available via Zoom

10. Public Comments. None

Next meeting date agreed: Jan 26, 4:00PM ER City Hall.

Meeting was adjourned at 4:49PM

Meeting minutes submitted by Joe Spitz

i again Rich!

I did indeed indicate that as we continue to discuss the River Trail project and more information is understood, we'll have more questions. As you consider the questions I sent last week, I wanted to add a more specific question , or perhaps an example of the questions we are asking.

- The Town of Cloverland has opened most of their Town roads as ATV routes, including Zimmer Road which intersects with HWY 70 just west of the intended River Trail Bridge. Vilas County has Highway H, just east of the intended bridge, as an ATV route. Therefore, is there an avenue for the county to request using DOT ROW between those two routes for "connection" purposes, and/or have they already done so.

The county could request to use WisDOT ROW in this area for construction of an ATV trail to connect Zeman Road to County Highway H. We have not received any request from the county at this time. Alternatively, the town and county could both pass ordinances to authorize the operation of ATV traffic on the WIS 70 driving lanes for the purpose of crossing the highway bridge. This is allowed under Wis Statute 23.33. To the best of our knowledge, neither the county nor town has taken any action to utilize that option at this time.

The River Trail Commission hopes to hold a meeting later this week and your responses would be very helpful for them in preparation for meeting with the county.

Hope to hear from you as soon as possible and thank you for your always helpful assistance.

Gary

On Thu, Dec 9, 2021 at 11:30 AM Gary Meister <garymeister@gmail.com> wrote:

Hi Rich!

It always seems a good time for a River Trail update when we come across questions.

Now that GHT has completed the Conover to Phelps (C/P) Trail we are able to increase our attention to moving the River Trail project forward. We have increased our Project Managers Team to include Jeff and Ann Currie along with Carlton and I. We have placed a focus on the Wisconsin River Bridge, alongside the HWY 70 Bridge. Jeff and Ann are developing an application for TAP funding due in January. We will also increase our efforts to first construct the trail sections from Eagle River, connecting with the Three Eagle Trail, west to the Bridge by hopefully at least completing the next phase of engineering in 2022.

Related to the Bridge, we are collaborating with Vilas County for their submitting application for state snowmobile funds for the TAP match. Our intention is that it be a Bike/Ped and Snowmobile only Bridge. There's always a possibility that the county would want to only use state snowmobile, and perhaps, ATV, funds. I'll list below a number of questions related to use of DOT ROW. I know some of these we've touched on before, but things keep changing and some things just seem to need to be repeated as various dynamics change.

- I know we've covered that the Town, or city, where the ROW is located should hold the DOT related permits for building the bike trail. In the case of the bridge, the county is being considered "the owner" of the bridge for purposes of it being a snowmobile bridge. Would they then need to be the applicant/holder of the permits for the bridge or would it still need to be the Town of Cloverland?

Yes, the County could be the applicant/holder of the permits for the bridge. DOT and the County would enter into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) for construction/operation/maintenance of the bridge and other infrastructure within the highway right of way.

- If we have TAP funding, ATV's would not be a user of the bridge, however, if no TAP funds are involved, could they be allowed a permit to be on DOT ROW to cross the bridge? If so, how far in either direction would they be allowed on the ROW?

It's difficult to answer this question as function of TAP funding vs no TAP funding exclusively. If public funds are awarded for a bridge project, there is the possibility that the grantor/program could have requirements that would not allow multi-use on the structure. WisDOT cannot speak for non WisDOT specific funding sources and requirements that could be connected with such funding. With regard to the length of ROW that could be allowed to be used, generally WisDOT is open to permitting of ATV trails within the highway right of way that serve to make logical connections between existing ATV routes and trails. There is no set min or max length, and each condition is unique. WisDOT does require construction of an improved riding surface for ATV trails within the right of way, similar to requirements for bike/ped trails.

- There is a "recreational bridge" over Mud Creek along HWY 70 west of Eagle River that we have proposed to use for the River Trail. We were informed that that bridge is for all uses including ATVs. First, is that DOT's understanding? Second, are there currently any requests or discussions for permits for an ATV trail along HWY 70 anywhere between Eagle River and St. Germaine? (A bit redundant from previous questions.)

WisDOT is not aware of the use status of the existing Mud Creek recreational bridge. We would need to review the original bridge funding source and maintaining authority (assuming this is currently Vilas

County), in order to determine the status. Currently, we do not have any permit applications for an ATV trail along WIS 70 between Eagle River and St. Germain.

I can imagine that as we move forward on this collaboration with the county we'll have a few more questions.