## Town of Reading Ad Hoc Northern Area Greenway Task Force

Final Report December 11, 2007

The Ad Hoc Northern Area Greenway Task Force first met in September of 2006. The members reviewed their charge and then began investigating a preliminary route that the Greenway could take. Members of the Task Force walked all of the various sections of the preliminary route. Kim Honetschlager, the staff person assigned to the NAG committee, mapped out the draft route.

We then began to study what shape the existing trails were in and what needed to be done to make the Greenway a reality. Various members research trail construction and possible grants using the Internet, while other members visited nearby communities to see what and how they had accomplished similar projects. Several members met with Brookline officials about the work they did at Halls Pond.

A rough cost estimate was developed based on the research we did and a spreadsheet of the costs was created (attached). We also looked at what parts of the trail could be reasonably accomplished with volunteer labor and what parts of the trail would need to be taken on by a professional. To this end, the committee wrote Trail Assessments (attached) that provide information on such things as trail name, location, description, work needed, time and cost estimates, skill level needed to accomplish the task, and other information. This information will allow volunteer groups to get a clear idea of what the scope of the project is that they might want to take on.

In addition to developing the main Greenway trail, the committee also identified an alternative route that the trail could follow if the proposed boardwalk connecting the Town Forest and Lobs Pound Mill site was unable to be constructed (see attached map). The committee also identified spurs off of the main trail that would allow access from different neighborhoods. Members of the committee have walked and assessed all of the spurs.

Midway through our tenure, we decided on a name change for the trail. Instead of the Northern Area Greenway, or NAG, we now refer to it as the Ipswich River Greenway Trail and suggest that this name change become permanent.

Two, privately owned parcels of land were identified by the committee as being considered to be obtained by the Town so that the Greenway trail could pass through them. One is located on Sanborn Lane. The alternative Greenway trail runs along Sanborn Lane. If this property were obtained, it would allow the trail to leave the street and pass through a wooded upland, ending across the street from the Lobs Pound

parking site on Mill St. The other parcel is on Main Street and would connect the main trail as it goes through Marion Woods.

The question of accessibility has been wrestled with by the committee. In keeping with their charge of "protecting and preserving the natural environment and the quality which makes these lands unique", the committee suggests that the areas indicated on the attached map be first considered for ADA accessability. Because of the present condition of the existing trails in this indicated area, the committee feels that these areas can be relatively easy to update so that they are accessible to all people. Any new trail construction would be accessible, too.

The cornerstone of the proposed Ipswich River Greenway Trail would be the construction of an approximately  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile long boardwalk that would parallel the Ipswich River, passing through the surrounding wetlands. This boardwalk would anchor the trail between the Town Forest and the Lobs Pound Mill property. To this end, the Reading Stream Team and the Town have submitted a grant request to Mass Riverways, requesting money to do a feasibility study concerning this boardwalk.

The committee is also proposing several enhancements to the trail

- At the Mattera Conservation area, a 400' trail is proposed, connecting the Log Cabin to Bare Meadow. At the end of this trail, a small viewing platform with seating is proposed.
- At approximately 200 yards west of the trailhead in the Town Forest, a 100'
  elevated boardwalk to the river is proposed. It would terminate with a modest
  pier that could be used for fishing, wildlife viewing, and as a kayak/canoe launch.
- At the Lob's Pound Mill site, we are proposing that this area become ADA accessible by improving the present parking area, the path leading into the site, and the construction of a small fishing pier/kayak launch. To this end, members of the committee and Fran Fink, Conservation Administrator, met with Doug Cameron of the MA Division of Fish and Game Fishing and Boating Access. We wanted to see if this site qualified for state funds for the construction of out proposed idea. All indications were that we do qualify for the state to come in and do all of the work. Fran Fink is taking the lead in this, working with the state to reach an agreement.

For the Greenway trail to reach completion and to function well, many things still need to be addressed, including, but not limited to:

- who "owns" the trail
- a maintenance plan for the trail
- parking at the proposed trailhead in the Town Forest where the old water treatment plant was

- crossing Main St. safely
- sign standardization
- new, detailed maps
- informational kiosks at trailheads
- updating and construction of the small, remaining portions of the main trail

A volunteer labor force is seen as very important to the success to the trail. Many people and groups have come forward during this process to voice their support for the project and offered to become involved. The Conservation Commission, REI, Friends of Reading Recreation, Reading Stream Team, Walkable Reading, the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC), and others have voice their support. The last Open Space survey showed that many Reading residents wanted more passive recreation opportunities. There is a momentum of enthusiasm for a Greenway trail in Reading.

In early November two events occurred to demonstrate citizen's interests in trails. First, there was a "trails summit". Members of various interest groups in Town came together to discuss how more Reading residents could take advantage of all of the beautiful open space in town.

Second, two Reading residents who work for the AMC, enlisted their co-workers to come to Reading and do an Adopt-A-Trail training program. Over 30 people showed up for this informative session where they learned about trail clearing, safety, and what is involved in adopting a piece of a trail in Reading.

Volunteers alone, however, won't be enough to bring the Ipswich River Greenway to fruition. Who will "carry the ball" for this project? The committee suggests that the Town consider the following:

- Town matching funds, whereby some money would be available for matching grants or volunteer groups could apply for matching funding.
- Community Preservation Act funding
- A maintenance plan for the trail.
- Additional staff dedicated to trail oversight and environmental education, possibly through a reallocation of the present resources.

During the fifteen months the committee has been working, we have come to believe that the creation of the Ipswich River Greenway trail across northern Reading could become a living legacy for all citizens of Reading.

Submitted December 6, 2007 David Williams Chair, Northern Area Greenway Task Force