
BRATT Committee talks timeline, fences at meeting

By TIM CAMERATO | Oct 25, 2014

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BELMONT — The Winni Trail project will be soliciting bids in December with an expected shovel date of spring 2015, according to members of the BRATT Committee. Members met on Thursday to discuss a timeline for the project along with proposed fencing along the trail.

Belmont Land Use Technician Rick Ball said engineers turned in an archeological study to the state Division of Historical Resources recently. The study was required after the trail's design moved within 100 feet of an area where artifacts were found.

Ball said the recent study did not produce any findings, but that still needs to be documented by the state.

“As soon as they get the memo back from that, that finishes off the categorical exclusion,” Ball said “I’m supposed to also have final plans by tomorrow [Friday].”

Ball said 89 holes were dug along certain parts of the future trail. He said there was some evidence of an “early 20th century garbage dump” used by farmers.

“At first it raised flags, but they found no buried evidence there,” Ball said.

He expects the state to turn around those findings in a week. After another week of submissions, Ball expects to be able to start attaining easements. He said that shouldn't set the project back and he'll hopefully have a month before bids go out in December.

Committee member Donna Hepp said she's been speaking with a group made up of representatives of the WOW Trail, Winnepesaukee River Trail, other area trails. She said they've met a couple of times and agreed to create a common logo.

“I think it's exciting to see there's some joint interest,” Hepp said.

The committee also discussed fencing along the trail. Chair Ron Mitchell said they should make a decision before the project goes out to bid. He said he doesn't want to see chain-link fencing along a section nearby the railroad tracks.

“Nobody I've ever talked to is really in favor of chain-link fence, obviously,” Mitchell said.

Ball said certain sections where the trail is raised about eight feet off the railroad bed might call for that type of fencing. He said the Department of Transportation calls for it within certain distances of the railroad.

Mitchell said that's to prevent people from trespassing on the tracks. In order to do that, he said they would already have to jump down a wall.

“To me, as opposed to a fence, we need a barrier,” Mitchell said. “Maybe all we need is a guardrail, a wood guardrail.”

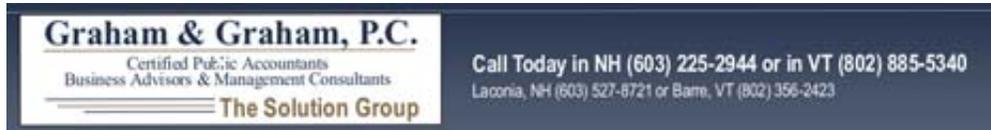
If somebody hit the guardrail and went over, Mitchell said they still wouldn’t make it onto the tracks because of the distance between the two.

“I just caution us to be thinking that DOT is going to allow guardrail height as opposed to fence height,” Ball said. “We can certainly broach the subject with them again, but I mean they’ve been pretty adamant in the past about ‘This is what it’s got to be.’”

He said the committee will have a chance to comment on the plans before they are officially finalized.

“I think we should make it clear to them that we want a recommendation that would allow wood instead of the chain-link,” Hepp said.

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