

U&D Corridor Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes

DATE & TIME: July 13, 2015 – 6:30
LOCATION: Legislative Chambers, 6th Floor, COB, Kingston, NY
PRESIDING OFFICER: Chairman Tracey Bartels
LEGISLATIVE STAFF: Fawn A. Tantillo, Sr. Legislative Employee
PRESENT: Legislators Herbert Litts, III, Lynn Archer, Carl Belfiglio, David Donaldson, Manna Jo Greene and James Maloney
ABSENT: Legislators Jeanette Provenzano and Kenneth Ronk, Jr.
QUORUM PRESENT: Yes
OTHER ATTENDEES: Director Marc Rider & Carol Armstrong, Ulster County Purchasing; Chris White, Deputy Director of Planning; Ernie Hunt, Catskill Mountain Railroad; John Grossbohl, City of Kingston Complete Streets; Lynn Rittenhouse; Walter Bollenbach; William Sheldon; Nick Mercurio; Meg Carey

Chairman Bartels called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

Motion No 1: Approving the minutes June 17, 2015 as presented with minor correction on page 6
Motion Made By: Legislator Belfiglio
Motion Seconded By: Legislator Archer
Roll Call Vote: No
Voting In Favor: Legislators Bartels, Litts, Archer, Belfiglio, Donaldson, Greene and Maloney
Voting Against: None
No. of Votes in Favor: 7
No. of Votes Against: 0
Disposition: Approved as amended

Chairman Bartels thanked Director Marc Rider and Senior Buyer Carol Armstrong from Purchasing. She told the committee that the goal tonight was to finalize the language in the Request for Proposals (RFP) to hire a consultant to assist the committee. She wanted to develop language members were comfortable with so the RFP could be finalized. She emphasized the short timeline and urgency to locate and engage a consultant,

Chairman Bartels noted that a sample RFP prepared by Ms. Armstrong had been emailed to members to review and circulated hard copies tonight for discussion. She asked Ms. Armstrong to explain the form and where input from the committee was needed.

Ms. Armstrong reviewed the various sections of the RFP for and briefly described how the standard “boiler plate” form was customized for this particular committee using language from Resolution No. 155 of April 21, 2015 that created the U&D Corridor Advisory Committee. Several sections were significant to hiring a consultant including Section 1.0 Purpose, Section 7.0 Evaluation Criteria, and Section 10.0 Scope of Work and how vendor’s submissions would be scored.

Ms. Armstrong and Mr. Rider discussed how questions from vendors are handled, how interviews can be set up, how the RFP would insure all responding vendors use a similar format and other details of the scoring and selection process.

Legislator Belfiglio questioned the Scope of Work and emphasized the importance of a consultant understanding how the corridor has been used for the past 25 years and the various visions and studies that have been done to date.

Ms. Armstrong suggested a narrative could be prepared that could include that information.

Legislator Donaldson wanted a consultant to consider the economic impact of railroad, tourist railroad, rail with trail, high speed bike use and various other options looking at the corridor in sections. He suggested the consultant be asked to consider alternate routes in some areas to allow a wider range of uses for the corridor itself. He suggested the consultant do cost comparisons of restoring the rail, building trail and/or using alternate and parallel corridors in some area to see what might be economically more feasible. He noted that rather than tourist walking and bike riding in isolated wooded areas, it might be user- friendly and economically desirable to bring a trail out to the main road where the public could take advantage of local businesses and other services.

Legislator Donaldson hoped the committee could find a consultant with experience with rail and trail who would recognize the potential for each use and be familiar with potential funding sources and grant opportunities. He was concerned that by focusing on trail development only, the County was missing out on other funding and grants that could be used to upgrade and develop tourist rail operations.

Chairman Bartels agreed that finding grant opportunities was critical but was concerned that with the available budget, perhaps this was too broad a request for this RFP. She raised the question of including the available budget figures in the RFP.

Legislator Greene understood Chairman Bartels concerns but felt the RFP should be more specific. She distributed a sheet she called a “wish list” with her suggestions for a consultant and Chairman Bartels thought it was a good place to start. She questions why Resolution No 275 of 2014 was mentioned but Resolution No. 155 of 2015 was not mentioned. She agreed with Legislator Donaldson point that the consultant be someone with experience with railroads, trails and rails with trails including the legal issues so they can make objective judgments on what could work here in New York.

Chairman Bartels agreed that details could be added along with other information that would make it clear to someone looking at this in the future or with no knowledge of Ulster County or the current issues would have a clearer understanding of the situation.

Legislator Litts discussed his professional experience with RFPs. He noted that New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) does not limit the length of the RFP, but the New York State Thruway Authority (NYSTA) limits the responses to three pages. He believes limiting the number of pages cuts out a lot of fluff.

Legislator Litts wants to know that the consultant has a clear understanding of the assignment/project and scoring must include experience of the firm with similar projects, with extra consideration of the experience of key personnel assigned to the project, the firms’ familiarity with the local area and the current work load to insure the staff is not over stretched.

Legislator Litts said he feels the scope of the RFP should clarify the committee wants a high level feasibility study of Rail in the corridor, what areas it is feasible and what areas it is not feasible. Then it should ask for a mid-level feasibility study of the best uses for various segments and the economic impact of rail and trail vs rail with trail.

Legislator Litts suggested the RFP only include a budget range. Ms. Armstrong asked what her office would tell vendors who call and ask what the budget is. A discussion of the pros and cons of including the approved budget figure in the RFP and the possibility of firms looking at the scope of work and bidding more than is budgeted.

Legislator Belfiglio liked the fact that the RFP was somewhat vague and a “blank slate” that does not want to steer the consultant toward any particular point of view or conclusion. He believes this leave the door open to new potentials that may not have been considered.

Legislator Donaldson and Chairman Bartels warned that without clear parameters the committee may not get useful information. Chairman Bartels felt the RFP should clearly state what the committee is looking for, what the problem is and offer solutions. Legislator Litts noted the RFP invites “alternate proposals” that would allow for new ideas to be considered.

Mr. Rider warned about making the RFP Scope of Service too broad and said when the committee gets the proposals they want to be able to compare apples to apples. Legislator Litts said that is another advantage of limiting the number of pages in the proposal.

Chairman thanked Legislator Greene for taking the time to put her thoughts in writing and the committee began a detailed discussion about various issues.

The committee reached consensus on the following points

- The Scope of work should directly address the highest and best use of the 39 miles of the U&D Corridor including economic development, environmental, health and quality of life issues. Various options should be examined including rail, trail and rail with trail so that the committee can make a determination of the optimum feasibility of the U&D corridor objectively and in the best interest of the people of Ulster County.
- Review existing studies and documents related to U&D Corridor plans by Ulster County, CMRR, Trail Advisory Committee, Open Space Institute and any others suggested by the U&D Corridor Advisory Committee.
- Examine and evaluate the economic impact of a tourist railroad operation, a trail to accommodate hikers, runners, mountain bikes, high speed bicycles and a rail-with-trail by segments of the corridor. Include issues related to handicapped accessibility for a wide range of users and impact on local municipalities.
- Estimate and evaluate cost of restoring rail, converting to trail or building rail with trail including the possibility of alternate and parallel corridors for trail use throughout the entire 39 mile U&D Corridor by segments.
- Examine feasibility of connections to other established and planned trails including the Kingston Greenline, Hurley Rail Trail and the Rosendale Rail Trail and other recreational assets throughout the County.
- Examine the best long-term “generational” plan to obtain the “optimum economic feasibility” of the U&D Corridor.
- Identify any outside funding sources and/or grant opportunities that may be available for development, construction and maintenance of the corridor.
- Add to “Qualifications” – The Consultant should be able to demonstrate and understanding of the legal issues regarding to rail and trail planning and implementation rail banking and easements.

- Include the budget range in the RFP.
- “Purpose” sets the stage. It should include “Pursuant to Resolution No. 155 of 2015” and develop a narrative or White Paper that gives a chronology and includes key studies and documentation. Legislator Archer agreed to begin to develop the narrative and get it out to committee members.

Review of Corridor Walk

The committee had a brief review of the corridor walk on Friday, June 26. Chairman Bartels thanked Mr. White and Mr. Hunt for their assistance in setting the walk up. Legislators discussed details and asked questions about various stops and the history of some of the things they could not discuss until this open meeting that included various wash outs, encroachments on the County right-of-way and disposition of old railroad ties.

Some of the committee members who did not go on that walk discussed opportunities to schedule future walks as individuals and as a group.

Legislator Belfiglio asked if Legislators could enter NYC DEP property without the required permits. Mr. White said a simple phone call would probably be enough and noted how cooperative and accommodating NYC DEP has been

Mr. Hunt suggested if a committee member is planning to walk on the track, CMRR would appreciate a heads up. He offered to accommodate committee members with rides on the train from Kingston Plaza to Hurley Mountain Road.

New Business

Legislator Greene raised the question of making the volumes of studies, reports and documentation available to members of the committee and the public.

Chairman Bartels noted that she has been working with staff and had compiled an extensive list of pertinent documents. She also requested and received suggestions from outside agencies. She plans to provide committee members with these documents electronically. A preliminary list of the documents would be circulated to committee members to review in a few days.

There being no further business before the Committee, a motion was made by Legislator Litts, seconded by Legislator Archer and carried to adjourn the meeting at 8:27 PM.

Respectfully submitted this 16th day of July, 2015

Fawn A. Tantillo, Senior Legislative Employee

Minutes Approved on August 4, 2015.