

Lowell Area Recreational Authority (LARA)

Meeting Minutes

March 10, 2021 6pm

Zoom

Members Present: Perry Beachum, Chair; Janine Mork, Secretary, Betsy Davidson, Treasurer, Amanda Rogers, Lowell Twp. Resident; Cliff Yankovich, City of Lowell Council member

Member Absent: Laura Garrison, at large rep.

Also Present: Thomas Gossiaux, Alternate; Dave Austin, Williams & Works;

Approval of Meeting Agenda

Beachum moved to approve the agenda as presented, seconded by Yankovich. Motion carried.

Meeting Minutes

Beachum moved to approve the minutes from the February 10, 2021 meeting as presented, Yankovich seconded. Motion carried.

Treasurer's Report

Davidson had three checks to write, Williams and Works, \$4915.80; Lowell Ledger, \$132.80; BHTD Steve Thompson \$2450.00. Betsy emailed everyone the treasurer's report to all.

Public Meeting – To receive input and comments from the public on the proposed application by LARA to the 2021 Michigan Department of Natural Resources Trust Fund for a grant for the construction of non-motorized trail improvements.

Dave Austin – gave presentation of trail project and purpose of this meeting. He had power point and map of proposed trail. Lowell is the only gap in 125- mile trail system. The project is broken into two parts. The sections we are talking about today is the LARA section of the trail, Grand River Avenue (ROW and easements) to Montcalm Ave. This is an extension from last year. We obtained additional grant money to finish the one-mile section between South Jackson St to Montcalm Avenue. He also updated the funding progress of the trail. We are currently \$515,00 short to get to project total. We need funding confirmed by October 1, 2021.

Lynn Mason – Fred Meijer River Valley Rail Trail group. She was interested and joined meeting to see what was going on. She was around 10 years ago when the trail was just beginning. She is available to answer questions, if needed.

Katlin Manszewski 13681 Oberly Dr.-Owns three parcels in section 8. Moved into area 2 years ago. Concerned that trail is now going through his back yard. They have dogs, he hunts the property. Will the trail affect his hunting rights on his property? They have signs on property and there are people that trespass at least once a month. Also, dogs will be visiting every walker since he has no fencing behind house. He had no notice of trail or this meeting. He moved to location for privacy and now he will have people walking in his backyard.

Dave Austin – this section of trail has been part of master plan of trail for at least five years and the majority of it is in abandoned railroad corridors. Trails have been co-existing for many years and there have not been any major incidents of property damage or hunting issues to his knowledge. It was a huge issue when trails were first proposed, the fears are not coming to fruition.

Lynn Mason – once trail is in place, people are very respectful of private property. There is no hunting from trail. She cannot think of any real issues with hunting or trespassing. Ron Gunderson is person to call in Belding area for trails. People do not want to call police, but may just have question or concern and just need a contact to talk to about it. They work with each property owner on case-by-case basis. LARA should have a contact person/number for issues like this.

Mark Anderson –there were similar concerns in phase 1A- proper signage installed and there hasn't been a single incident on the trails.

Austin – project is still 2-3 years away. Up to this point, the property was under the jurisdiction of the DNR. We are taking it over to complete the trail so there won't be any gaps in the 125-mile trail. As long as work remains within right of way of railroad, it is not required to notify property owners because it is not affecting private property. We have tried hard to let everyone know what is going on through social media, etc.

Betsy Davidson – We have a Facebook page and website for LARA.

No other public comment on Zoom. There are two letters submitted. Amanda Rogers read them. They are paraphrased below.

Sharon Bonczyk, 13393 Grand River Dr, Lowell, MI. Does not believe the route past her house is safe. Feels she did not get enough notice of meeting. Not enough planning went into this

route. There are better, more scenic routes this trail could have gone through. This will affect the enjoyment of her home/yard.

Todd, Kathleen, and Carter West – Riverside Woods Neighborhood off Riverside Drive. They love the trail and look forward to the completion. They currently trailer their bikes to a starting point and once the trail is complete, they won't have to anymore.

Yankovich – read email from Carol DeYoung, Vergennes Township Loves the trails. Would like to see parking at Vergennes intersection of trail. It is dangerous since the cars drive through there at 55+ mph.

Lynn Mason – parking issue – issues around Bailey Road and 3-Mile Road area - she has been told that MDOT is the one that has to address parking and signage along road. Is there any private property in that section that would allow parking. They are just getting started on those discussions.

Perry Beachum – The traffic light was not part of the trails. It was installed, he believes, for truck traffic going to King Milling. Also, we were given task to connect trail through Lowell. The railbed will not be abandoned through Lowell due to King Milling needing it. Just to apply to go across railroad tracks with trail cost \$10,000 and it was turned down. We as a trail group, have been frustrated, but we keep moving forward. He appreciates all the comments. LARA has been visible through social media, Lowell Expo, newspaper articles. We have worked hard to come up with a solution to make all parties happy. We can't please everyone but we do our best.

Mark Anderson – Invites all people on tonight to attend our next meeting in April. It will be in person and will answer a lot of questions.

Rogers – any comments on google doc on Facebook?

Austin - Not required to read them but they will be included with application package. The Board members will receive a copy of the application.

End of public comment.

Perry Beachum read Resolution:

**Consideration of the MDNR TRUST FUND GRANT APPLICATION for the RIVER VALLEY RAIL TRAIL LOWELL CONNECTION PROJECT. RESOLUTION OF ADOPTION
RESOLUTION 01-21**

MDNR Trust Fund Grant Application for the River Valley Rail Trail Lowell Connection Project
Resolution of Adoption. Resolution 01-21

Whereas, the Lowell Area Recreation Authority (LARA) supports the submission of an application titled, “River Valley Rail Trail Lowell Connection Project” to the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund for development of non-motorized trailsthru the Lowell Community to connect the Flat River Valley Rail Trail to the Grand River Valley Rail Trail, and

Whereas, the proposed application is supported by the LARA 5-year Approved Parks and Recreation Plan, and

WHEREAS, the proposed application is working cooperatively with the City of Lowell who is also seeking funding from the MDNR and private foundations for this project, and,

WHEREAS, the LARA’s portion of the estimated total project cost is \$965,000 and

WHEREAS, the LARA has made a financial commitment to the project in the amount of \$665,000 matching funds, in cash and/or force account,

WHEREAS, if the grant is awarded the applicant commits its local match and donated amounts from the following sources:

Lowell Township	\$ 5,000
Vergennes Twp.	\$ 5,000
Private Foundations	<u>\$655,000</u>
Total	\$665,000

Yankovich moves to adopt Resolution 01-21. Anderson supports. Roll Call vote- Beachum, yes, Mork- yes, Davidson-yes, Anderson-yes, Rogers- yes, Yankovich- yes. Garrison absent
Motion carried.

Austin reminded all there will be a similar meeting at Lowell City Council Monday March 15, 2021. If there are further comments, they can go to LARA webpage and fill out a form. There are also FAQ’s there that should answer a lot of the questions the residents may have about the trails.

Lowell Area High School Improvements – Steve Turnbull

Steve Turnbull – shared a plan outlining where the new soccer/lacrosse fields will be located, between the current softball fields and tennis courts. Due to the size of the equipment needed, the parking lot between this area will be fenced in along with the area being developed for the fields. The project will begin at the end of next month (April) and be finished by mid-August. The issue is that part of the trail will be blocked off and many people use this route to get to the Wittenbach Center.

Beachum – where will be the alternate route to get to the Wittenbach Center during construction? Will the trail be moved at all when the fields are done? Will there be curb cuts for ADA accessibility?

Turnbull- the students have not really been using the Wittenbach Center during the Pandemic. He will discuss it further with the high school principal for the spring classes. Also, are there specifications he needs to follow for the trails before releasing the contractor?

Austin – he is engineer for trails and also for Vergennes Township. He has previously looked at plans and made comments. He would just expect that any damage to existing trail be repaired. An observation he would like to make is will the islands at the parking lot by the cafeteria exits be ADA accessible? It would allow a person in a wheelchair to get to the field from the school building without going into the parking lot.

Turnbull – he will look into it. It is not too late into project to make a change like that.

New Business

Lowell Expo June 12

Deadline to register is April 2. Our next meeting is April 14. Would anyone be able to work it all day? It will be outside on Riverwalk. Beachum questions how successful it will be in the summer with the pandemic. There is a booklet they are printing to go to every household. He suggests putting a full-page ad in with FAQ's if we don't do expo. It would cost \$580.

Anderson – We should publish FAQ in Ledger and on our website. We also should do Expo given the fact that people think we are not giving enough info out.

36 booths available, 32 spoken for. Mark Anderson will see if we can share with Lowell Township or get a booth next to them. He will advise this week.

Anderson moves we approve the \$580 to advertise for the trail in the expo booklet. Yankovich supports. Motion carried.

Old Business

Mercantile Bank – Combine Savings into checking. Janine will handle. Done.

Lowell Little League – Mike Minier Nothing new

Bench and Platform on Alden Nash No update

Rail Trail Connection Progress and Updates

Austin – Public comment at tonight's meeting and meeting March 15. Application due April 1. We are well on track to do that. May need extra support letters. He will let us know if needed.

Anderson – sent Betsy application for Kellogg Foundation. We had applied verbally with Green Team. Our request was too large for Green Team but we are moving to a different area of Kellogg Foundation and hopefully Green Team can put in a good word for us there. We will not stop seeking other grants up until our deadline and can maybe relieve some of the community funds.

Davidson – appreciates them spending so much time on this.

Anderson – post on website about cleaning up trails as soon as possible. Davidson and Rogers will keep up on social media posts.

Davidson – Talked with Chamber and they are onboard with adding Lowell Area Trailway links to Chamber website. The website really needs an update. This will work out well and not cost LARA any money.

Beachum will pick up shovels from trails.

Beachum moved to adjourn the meeting, Rogers supported. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 7:28pm.

Next Meeting – April 14, 2021, 6pm Lowell City Hall