

WHATELY OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE MINUTES Nov 11, 2019

Meeting time and place: 5:00 pm, Old Town Hall

Attendance: Donna Wiley, Allison Bell, Jonathan Edwards, Paul Newlin, Tom Litwin, Scott Jackson, Dick O'Brien (Conservation Works), Pete Westover

1. The group unanimously voted Jonathan the chair.
2. The secretary will be a rotating position.
3. The group agreed to propose to the CPC Committee an addition to the CPC Plan, a paragraph that reads as follows:

Page 6: add to Recreation CPA Project Priorities:

- “Develop a multi-purpose trail network that provides hiking and other outdoor recreational possibilities such as snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, mountain biking, horseback-riding, and the like, and provides links to trails of adjacent towns.”
4. Scott Jackson presented digital maps that show lands important for connectivity, BioMap2 areas, resilient landscapes, watershed land, other lands (ag lands...) that should be protected. He suggested that town priorities should be toward protecting wetlands, existing trails (as opposed to new trail construction) e.g. trails on the Dauchy property. He mentioned the Ashfield trail system as a possible model.

Discussion:

Dept of Fish & Game lands are no longer eligible for new trail construction, but existing trails can probably be maintained with DFG permission. There may be trails already in place in Great Swamp.

Tom and Allison both brought up concerns about a small number of trail users exhibiting rude behavior, acknowledging that most people on the trails are polite but a few cause problems for the owners or neighbors.

The Snowmobile Club maintains trails that would not be appropriate for non-winter use. Trails can be posted “no motorized vehicles” but who will enforce? Jonathan suggested working toward connections with adjacent communities, with a joint system of trail supervision. Dick cited the Groton Trail Committee’s trail master plan and the several “Boroughs” (Southborough area) that manage a multi-town trail system.

5. Dick O'Brien (former chair of MARTAB, Mass Recreational Trails Advisory Board, and partner, Conservation Works, LLC) described state trail grant programs, both under the umbrella of “Mass Trails” (see attached info sheet): The RTP program (Recreational Trails Program) awards grants for actual trail construction. The Town or Kestrel Land Trust could submit an RTP application. The Commonwealth Trails program awards grants for trail planning and multi-town efforts. The latter program emphasizes Rail Trails, shared-use trails, and regional trail systems. Applications to the latter program could be submitted by one town as the agent for several towns, by FRCOG, or by Kestrel Land Trust. The deadline for both programs is Feb 1 each year. To submit a regional application you need to show that you have a viable regional group. Both programs

require a 20% match that can include donations, CPA funds, or volunteer labor at \$30/hour. Maximum awards for both programs are \$50,000 or \$100,000 if the proposal is regional in scope.

Discussion: Scott suggested the importance of partnering with others. CPA funds can be used to purchase trail easements. The committee needs to build a relationship with the Snowmobile Club. Jonathan mentioned the importance of using trails to attract people to local businesses. Allison mentioned the importance of using trails for educational purposes. Dick cited the RTP's education fund, which awards grants on a rolling deadline basis with a maximum of \$10,000.

6. Next meeting: Jonathan will send out an email.

Respectfully submitted,

Pete Westover

2019 MassTrails Grants Program

frequently asked questions (FAQ)



WHAT IS MASSTRAILS?

MassTrails is an inter-agency initiative of the Commonwealth lead by the Governor's Office, Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, Department of Transportation and the Department of Conservation and Recreation. MassTrails seeks to expand and connect the Commonwealth's networks of off-road, shared use pathways and recreational trails for all users across Massachusetts by providing matching grants, technical assistance and resources to individuals, municipalities, non-profits, and other public entities to design, construct, and maintain high quality Massachusetts trails.

WHAT IS THE MASSTRAILS GRANTS PROGRAM?

MassTrails provides matching grants to communities, public entities, and non-profit organizations to design, create, and maintain the diverse network of trails, trail networks, and trails experiences used and enjoyed by Massachusetts residents and visitors.

WHO CAN APPLY FOR A MASSTRAILS GRANT?

Eligible applicants include municipalities, state or federal agencies, and non-profit organizations.

WHAT CAN MASSTRAILS FUNDS BE USED FOR?

MassTrails provides grants for project development, design, engineering, permitting, construction, and maintenance of trails in Massachusetts. A "trail" is defined as an off-road linear corridor with varied surface type, width, length, and terrain. It can be primarily recreational in nature and/or serve the purpose of connecting communities and people to distinct destinations. Eligible project activities can include:

- Trail planning, design, engineering, and permitting;
- Construction of new trails;
- Maintenance and restoration of existing trails;
- Development and rehabilitation of trailside and trailhead amenities;
- Purchase and lease of trail-related construction and maintenance equipment;
- Acquisition (in limited cases) of easements and fee interest in property for trail corridors;

*Sidewalks and/or road improvements are not eligible as trail projects under this program.

WHAT TYPES OF TRAILS CAN BE FUNDED UNDER MASSTRAILS?

Types of trails can include shared use pathways (i.e.: Charles River Pathway, Mystic River Greenway); rail trails (i.e.: Mass Central Rail Trail, Norwottuck Rail Trail, Clipper City Rail Trail); natural surface trail systems (i.e.: Appalachian Trail, Worcester East-West Trail, Stone Farm Trail System in Brockton); community/accessible trails with various surfaces (i.e.: Riverwalk in Great Barrington, Watertown Riverfront Park and Braille Trail, New Bedford Harborwalk); water trails (i.e.: Connecticut River Paddlers Trail, Alewife Brook Greenway), off-road motorized trails (i.e.: accommodate ATV's, off-road motorcycles, snowmobiles).

WHEN IS THE GRANT DEADLINE?

MassTrails grants are due on February 1st of each year.

WHAT IS THE MAXIMUM GRANT AMOUNT THAT CAN BE REQUESTED?

Grant amounts are dependent on the project and its needs, with a minimum grant award of \$10,000 and a maximum grant award of \$300,000 awarded to high priority projects. The grant amount requested should realistically align with the proposed project, with details supported within a submitted budget.

MASSTRAILS IS A REIMBURSEMENT GRANT PROGRAM – WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

MassTrails grantees must first pay for expenditures themselves and then submit for reimbursement using the required documentation. Costs eligible for reimbursement include all approved project costs incurred on or after Grantee's contract execution date up to the end date of the contract.

IS THERE A MATCH REQUIREMENT?

MassTrails grants are MATCHING grants and require that proponents provide a minimum of 20% of the total project cost. The source of match can vary dependent on the project type, but can include cash match (can be obtained from other state or federal grants, CPA funds, donations, etc.), donated services, and volunteer labor. The project application must include estimates for the matching portion of the project cost. The match must cover a minimum (greater amounts are encouraged) of 20% of the total value of a project.

HOW LONG DO GRANTEES HAVE TO COMPLETE THE PROJECT?

Most project development and design projects will have one year to complete all spending and match under the grant, with the funding available within the state fiscal year (July 1st to June 30th of the following year). Trail construction and maintenance projects may be permitted a longer timeframe of up to two years, dependent on the scope and specifications of the project. For more details, contact the MassTrails Program Manager.

HOW WILL MY APPLICATION BE EVALUATED?

A grant review team uses the grant criteria to assess, score and rank proposals. MassTrails seeks projects that:

1. Plan, design, or construct off-road shared-use pathway and recreational trail connections between where Massachusetts residents live, learn, work, shop, and recreate,
2. Serve the diversity of Massachusetts residents,
3. Allow for efficient use of grant funds,
4. Are ready for the proposed phase,
5. Adequately address safety,
6. Adequately address accessibility, and
7. Create diverse, high quality recreational experiences and connect users to the natural and cultural wealth of Massachusetts.

WHAT IS THE PROGRAM LOOKING FOR IN TERMS OF TRAIL CONNECTIONS?

MassTrails prioritizes building out the longer distance trail networks across the state, filling in critical gaps in existing networks, and overcoming current barriers to connectivity while taking into consideration the number of people that will potentially access a given project.

HOW DO I SUBMIT AN APPLICATION FOR A MASSTRAILS GRANT?

All applications must be submitted through the online application portal at www.mass.gov/guides/masstrails-grants. It is recommended that applicants review the "Application Template" provided on the MassTrails Grants website and fill in all fields before beginning the online application process. The template covers all questions and information can be copied and pasted into the online application when ready.