

Minutes - FRIENDS of MILITARY RIDGE TRAIL

Meeting Date: June 13, 2022

Meeting Location: Ridgeway Train Depot, Ridgeway, WI

Friends attending: Dave Pearson, Vice-President; Bill Kalscheur, Treasurer; Sarah Castello, Secretary; Lydia Haynes; Mark Cis, Biker; Jerry McAdow, Biker; Adam Maus; Rodney Albers; Bruce Paull; Brad Bates, DNR; Kevin Swenson, DNR

Agenda Additions

None

Minutes

Bill motioned and Lydia seconded to accept the May 2022 meeting minutes. The motion passed unanimously.

Financial Reports

The financial report showed an end of May 2022 balance of \$29,898.47 in the Farmers Savings Bank checking account. We have started collecting lots of money from trail passes. Lydia motioned and Sarah seconded to accept the financial report as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

DNR Topics

The Verona tunnel opened over a month early, the detour is no longer in place, and the trail is back to its normal route.

DNR folks graded from Verona to Blue Mounds today.

DNR crew has started up monthly mowing of the trail shoulders.

DNR staff now has one LTE that they are splitting between the Badger and Military Ridge trails.

DNR is not sure if the FBMSPP solar panel project has been approved.

DNR has had the Riley parking lot sign routed. It needs to be painted and installed once it arrives.

Next week we will have a new park manager at Blue Mounds, Brad Bates. Kevin is becoming the Natural Resources Property Supervisor (he will still come to the meetings).

Horribly Hilly

The Friends set up location has been changed to the baseball diamond. We are a little light on staff to work the station.

Scavenger Hunt

Lydia worked up a flier for the event which has been distributed, there was an article in the Mount Horeb Mail, Adam and Ethan have posted the event on the website and Face book page, the Waltz Park Shelter is rented (\$30), signs are being made to alert bikers to slow down, and Linda McMeen is working up the small sheet for children to use to identify scavenger hunt items. We still need to purchase ice cream and sprinkles. So far we have spent about \$50. Sarah asked Friends to put fliers in the kiosks.

Debrief: Thursday, May 26: The depot was open for visits from the Barneveld and Dodgeville 4th graders. Bill, Jerry and Dave divided the children into 4 groups (one group was always in the play area outside), and spent 20 minutes with each group. The kids were interested in the history of the station which fit into the WI history part of the 4th grade curriculum.

Debrief: June 5 Depot Open House (Jerry W. - 13 Attendees, \$20 Donation)

Debrief: June 11: Open Depot In Conjunction With Hyde Days. Rodney and Patti Albers were at the depot and had 8 people. It was bad weather.

Maintaining and Funding Trail and Trail Bridges

Below is the outline Mark Cis emailed to the group 6/5. It was also the basis for his introduction to the topic.

Discussion Topic: Condition of Bridges on Military Ridge Trail: Can the FMRT Do Anything to Improve Their Condition in a Timely Fashion?

Observations of MRT Bikers:

1. Many of the bridges on MRT have deteriorated to the point where they provide a bone rattling ride and are a hazard to both bikers and walkers. Several of the bridges between Verona and Mt. Horeb are especially dangerous. Hazards include...

- a. Split and rotted boards and holes in the boards that make up the bridges' decks.
- b. Uneven surfaces which are the result of some of the deck boards being replaced.
- c. Holes in the paths at the point where the limestone path meets the wooden deck.
- d. Nails that have popped up.

2. While the DNR's practice of replacing worn boards eliminates some hazards, it creates the hazard of an uneven, bone jarring surface.

3. Some bikers are now reducing their use of the MRT due to its bridge conditions and increasing their use of other area trails.

Questions Raised by MRT Bikers

1. What is the FMRT's vision for trail surface conditions – in this case, bridge decks?

2. Where on the spectrum of involvement with the DNR regarding trail surface standards/conditions does the FMRT fall? A forceful advocate of better trail standards/conditions? Or, a passive observer of how the DNR elects to maintain trail surface conditions? Or, somewhere in between?

3. How should trail users channel their efforts to improve trail surfaces? Through direct contact with the DNR? Through the FMRT?

Questions Which the FMRT Might Research/Consider

1. What is the DNR's plan to improve the MRT bridge conditions?

a. What is the DNR's timeline?

b. What form will the bridges' improvement take? (MRT Bikers' Opinion: The wooden decks are not a good solution. Possible solution: Concrete slab deck as has been used on Badger State Trail bridges near Highway M. Related question: Will concrete slab hold up under snowmobile usage?)

c. How are the improvements being scheduled? In terms of need? From east to west? When funds become available?

d. To what extent is the DNR's plan dependent on its budget? To what extent is the DNR's trail budget at risk of being reduced through cut-backs?

2. How satisfied is the FMRT with the DNR's plan? That is, how well does the DNR plan fulfill the FMRT's vision for the trail? (Of course, this question assumes that the FMRT has a vision for the trail and, specifically, its surface conditions.)

3. Can the DNR plan be improved through additional funds provided by or brokered through the FMRT. Is the DNR willing to change its plan if additional funds can be secured from private sources? Improvements to the DNR plan could include...

a. ...accelerating the plan's timeline.

b. ...using better deck materials than that contemplated in the current DNR plan.

c. Anything else?

4. If additional funding will improve the DNR's plan, is the FMRT prepared/willing to take on the task of generating additional funding? Additional funding could be generated via...

a. ...a capital campaign.

b. ...the securing of bridge "sponsors"? Example: Ask EPIC to sponsor (i.e. pay for) a bridge improvement (perhaps with sponsor plaque on the bridge.)

c. Anything else?

5. How should trail users channel their efforts to improve trail surfaces? Through direct contact with

Mark said the following observations were taken from trail 3 groups of bikers (both male and female and people who bike at least once a week on all of the area trails, eg. Sugar River, Capital City, etc.). They described the bridges on the MRT as being in poor conditions, uncomfortable and maybe dangerous. Some bikers are no longer wanting to bike the MRT trail due to the poor conditions of the bridges.

Mark asked about the FMRT vision for trail surfaces and bridges, how we interact with the DNR, if we are we satisfied with the DNR and what they do. He asked how trail users should channel their efforts to get trail and bridges improved and if the Friends were interested in doing something to help the DNR improve the bridge conditions. These are questions they could ask the DNR; What are DNR plans to improve the bridges; how satisfied are the Friends with the DNR's plan, to what extent does it satisfy the groups vision of the trail; can the DNR plan be improved through additional funds (possibly supplied by this group); If FMRT were able to provide funding could the DNR change the plan or accelerate the bridge improvements; if DNR could change the plan or accelerate bridge repairs with additional funding, to what extent is the FMRT prepared to secure additional funds; how should trail users channel their effort (work through Friends, a new group, capital campaign).

Brad said Friends are not responsible for the conditions of the trail, the Friends think bridges do need lots of work, and alert DNR to problems on bridges that could be dangerous. Kevin talked about the plan to use cement overlay on many of the bridges. A problem with this approach is weakening substructure (in some cases) of the bridge. Repairing the substructure can involve the Army Corp of Engineers. Friends can not lobby legislators for specific projects but can make their views known as individual citizens. DNR have submitted tons of projects to management for all kinds of projects to improve the trail, tree planting, deck overlay, structure support,

There was discussion about the Friends earmarking funds for a specific projects and if the designation of Friends money to a specific bridge would accelerate the DNR repair of bridgeton the trail.

Kevin and Brad have been actively applying for funding to replace bridges for years. When they settled on the plan of concrete overlay for some bridges they started looking at the structures holding up the bridges. This involved the wetland below the bridges and could lead to an environmental analysis. The DNR has submitted a 2 million dollar project for trail improvement (focusing on the bridges) that is competing with other submitted DNR projects.

Bill suggested getting a third party engineer involved to look at options for bridge replacement. Kevin's recommended convening a FMRT committee to discuss bridge recommendations. Bill motioned that we table the discussion and get more information on what we can do, what the costs are, and prioritize which bridges should be looked at first, Rodney seconded it. The motion passed unanimously.

Mark put forth the plan of raising money to go towards a specific project, such as asking sponsors (companies, family foundations, etc) to fund specific bridges.

Depot Sunday Open House Volunteers Sign-up: We still need people to volunteer with Jerry for July 3, August 7, and Sept. 4. Friends need to check their calendars and volunteer for these dates.

Facebook Page and Webpage - There were no updates on Facebook. Adam did the following to the Website: added the Facebook link; updated the membership page with the donation information; added the scavenger hunt event; worked with Tamilyn to get website security problems worked out; and added Skoal House as a new trail pass vendor.

ATC Line

Chuck Tennyson said there is a waiting period to appeal to the 7th court. Lawyers are providing briefs and a hearing is scheduled for in the fall. Driftless Defenders are hoping for an injunction in a couple weeks to stop the whole project until the hearing.

Caboose Window Rebuilds by Michael Larson

Mike Larson, a ridgeway woodworker, has offered to rebuild the caboose windows for the cost of materials only.

September Meeting

Epic has scheduled us for a room to use for the September meeting. We want to get in ahead of time to look at the space.

July Meeting

The next FMRT meeting will be July 11 2022, 5:30 at the Ridgeway Depot.

Respectfully submitted,
Sarah Castello, Secretary