Squannacook Greenways, Inc. – Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, August 19, 2026

Attendees

Directors	Peter Cunningham, Bill Rideout, Mark Cram, Frank Murphy, Dan Hager, Dale Gates, Emma Shepherd, Joan Wotkowicz
Guests	Shlomiya Lightfoot (InLand); Ron Steers (Townsend Trail Alliance)

Notes

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 PM.

1. Project Updates

a. Groton Extension

- Dan Wells is completing the wetlands and Natural Heritage portions of the project and is awaiting information from Frank Murphy.
- Peter will follow up with Frank so Dan can continue; no response from Natural Heritage has been received regarding the Harbor Church/turtle habitat area.

b. Townsend Harbor

Erosion behind Harbor Village Plaza

- The Conservation Commission is awaiting a remediation plan from Babin Landscaping; the next Commission meeting is August 26.
- Erosion and runoff have affected the trail and wetland buffer, making bicycle travel difficult; the board discussed possible causes and the need for stormwater management that also supports trail access to nearby businesses.
- Peter will contact Harbor Village for a Babin Landscaping point of contact and explore whether a board member with engineering experience can review the plan.

MESA / Natural Heritage notice to Townsend Historical Society (80 Main Street)

- Natural Heritage issued a notice requiring a turtle protection plan before additional work proceeds at the Townsend Historical Society site at 80 Main Street.
- The concern followed reinstallation of erosion-control wattles with a gap rather than overlapping, potentially affecting turtle movement; Dan Wells inspected the area.
- Options include waiting until October 15, requesting permission to work in the less-sensitive area north of the church, or paying for daily oversight by a qualified specialist.

- The Historical Society will coordinate with Dan Wells and Natural Heritage; waiting until October 15 appeared simplest, but no final decision was recorded.
- After construction, the shared parking area is expected to return to normal use without ongoing turtle protections.

SGs' position on appointments to Townsend Conservation Commission

- Board members supported sending the previously circulated letter about appointments to the Townsend Conservation Commission.
- Although Kim Greenough was appointed that evening, the board agreed the letter should still be sent to provide guidance for future vacancies.
- Peter will incorporate Joan's edits and send the letter to the Select Board, copying the Town Administrator and administrative assistant.

Harbor Pond abutter concerns (Ron Steers, Townsend Trail Alliance)

- Ron reported that an abutter had yelled at children using the trail while walking their bicycles; the board affirmed that the trail is open to the public and walking a bicycle through the area is acceptable.
- The board agreed that any suggestion to use the sidewalk should be communicated respectfully and that Greenways should clarify its own signage rather than rely on signs installed by others.
- Mark will draft clearer signage distinguishing the preferred route for riding from the route for walking and follow up constructively with the abutter.
- Ron also raised a concern about an individual who regularly spends time on the trail; members knew the individual and reported no known threatening behavior, so no action was assigned.

InLand update and August 30 event

- Shlomiya Lightfoot described an August 30 event at the Reed Homestead focused on invasive-plant removal, native plant stewardship, and Indigenous history and land stewardship, with Abenaki representatives participating.
- The board offered tables, chairs, pop-up tents, photography, water, and other supplies.
- Attendees may use the existing portable restroom at Harbor Church, with volunteers available to direct them; a hose connection is available at Reed Homestead.
- Soap and water will be provided for handwashing, and newsprint or paper will be brought for an alternative drawing activity.
- Event flyers may be posted temporarily on the rail-trail kiosks.

c. Townsend Extension

- No new update was reported; follow-up with Frank Murphy will continue as schedules permit.

2. Events and Maintenance

a. Eagle Scout kiosk installation at Fishermen's Parking Lot (August 16)

- The board praised the kiosk installed by Eagle Scout candidate Michael Jones at Fishermen's Parking Lot on August 16.
- Mark will collect the old placeholder posts, and a board member with a key to the other kiosk will ask Michael to transfer the new kiosk key to Mark.
- Permanent kiosk information should relate to the trail, local environment, wildlife, or relevant community activities; temporary event flyers may be posted on the outside.
- No formal written policy was adopted; members may discuss proposed postings by email, and political or inappropriate material should not remain on the kiosks.

b. Maintenance updates

- Trail-clearing day was tentatively scheduled for Saturday, November 14, 2026; volunteers should bring leaf blowers and other clearing tools.

3. Grants

a. MassTrails Grant

- MassTrails reimbursements remain pending for approximately $13,000 and a second request of approximately $30,000.
- The first request includes work completed before the official grant start date; the grant contact indicated those costs may still be reimbursable.
- Both requests were submitted in early July, with an est. processing period of six weeks.
- The Mackenzie Engineering bridge-design invoice has been partially paid, and the balance will be paid when reimbursement funds arrive.

b. Other grants / potential funding

- Peter and Bill reported a virtual meeting with Senator Cronin and Representative Scarsdale about potential earmark funding.
- They were asked to prepare a four-slide presentation on the trail's regional connections and benefits for when the process becomes active in March 2027.
- The senator's office expressed optimism about a possible award of approximately $40,000, but no commitment was made.

- Peter plans to contact Congresswoman Trahan's office about possible funding for specific projects, including bridge reconstruction.

4. Financial and Fundraising Reports

- The board noted that available funds remain limited while project expenses continue.
- A donation was received through PayPal; the funds must be transferred separately to the Workers Credit Union account.

5. Review July Meeting Minutes

- The July meeting minutes were approved unanimously (Joan moved, Bill seconded).

6. Schedule Next Meeting and Adjourn

Next meeting: Wednesday, September 16, 2026, at 5:00 PM

The meeting adjourned at 8:11 PM.