

Groveland Community Trail CPC Proposal

Prepared by the Groveland Open Space and Trails Committee

Dec 1, 2015

The Groveland Community Trail

OSTC Request for 2016 Annual Town Meeting Warrant Article

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Community Preservation Committee
Town of Groveland
183 Main Street
Groveland, MA 01834

Dear Committee Members:

The Groveland Open Space and Trails Committee (OSTC) respectfully asks that a warrant article be created for residents' consideration at Groveland's April 2016 Town Meeting – whereby voters would have an opportunity to support the advancement of the engineering design plan for the **Groveland Community Trail** project (already in progress).

OSTC requests a warrant article for \$55,300 of existing Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds. These requested funds will complete a "100% design plan" for what we are calling the "*trail extension*" for the off-road trail segment. This *trail-extension* will design for the road crossing at Main Street, and bring the off-road trail segment up to the floodplain at Johnson's Creek. This *trail-extension* will also link to a X-MILE walking loop and trail-head/staging area at 441 Main Street, to be designed and funded by the property owner. The plans for the walking loop are in design and being coordinated by the property owner with Groveland Conservation Commission. As the future connectivity with the Bradford Rail Trail remains a top priority, it is cheaper for Groveland to design for this *trail extension* now, as part of the existing MassDOT design submission already in motion.

Note: this requested warrant article is subsequent to a TWO SUCCESSFUL WARRANT ARTICLES voted and passed at April 2014 and 2015 Town Meeting where voters supported an appropriation of \$150,000 and \$150,000 respectively, of existing CPA funds, to begin and later complete design funding for the off-road trail segment from King Street to Main Street.

Since April 2014's Town Meeting, project leaders have accomplished the following major milestones and continue on track to be successfully funded by MassDOT public grants for the construction phase of this project in the years ahead:

1. **Confirmed title work for off-road trail segment:** in July 2014, CPA funds were paid to attorney John Troy of Atkinson, NH, who confirmed that no encumbrances should preclude the Town of Groveland from pursuing its plans to develop a trail along National Grid's existing ROW. By all accounts, it appears National Grid retains ownership of 100% of the lands required for the proposed off-road trail segment and that, as planned, no privately-owned parcels will be permanently affected.
2. **RFP and engineer selection:** by way of a public RFP process in July 2014, led by the Town Finance Director, the Town of Groveland selected Fay Spofford & Thorndike (FST) to be its lead engineer design partner. FST has, and is in the process of completing the following actions:
 - a. COMPLETED: 25% Design Plan for the off-road trail segment: 441 Main Street to King Street along National Grid ROW
 - b. COMPLETED: 10% Design Plan for the on-road trail segment: Town Hall to 441 Main Street via Main Street
 - c. COMPLETED Public Engagement Forums: OSTC and FST lead four public forums before Town Meeting in April 2015, including a mailed letter of awareness to over 250 residents, including ALL ABUTTING PROPERTY OWNERS.
 - d. IN PROGRESS: 100% Design Plan for the off-road trail segment, King Street to Main Street
3. **Awareness and engagement with National Grid:** Michael Davis and Alex Johnson maintain an open line to Steven Towle at National Grid – Steven is personally responsible for the long term lease agreement, and is completing the process currently with Georgetown. Michael and Alex met Steven in January 2014 when he visited at Veasey to review Groveland's project. He encouraged us to re-engage his office when a 25% design plan was complete, and submitted to MassDOT. We have been in contact with Steven, keeping him updated of our major milestones. We believe Steven will be a positive partner in our conversations with National Grid.
4. **Political awareness with State Senator and State Representative:** Alex Johnson and Michael Davis met with Senator Bruce Tarr and Representative Lenny Mirra on September 15, 2014 to raise awareness of our Town's project and explore options for future coordination. An open line of communication is ongoing. Both the Senator and Representative encouraged us to re-engage their respective offices upon completed submission of a 25% Design Plan to MassDOT. It is at this time that they would be in a more appropriate position to insert their support (if requested by Groveland) with both MassDOT and National Grid to help navigate the respective processes and/or help expedite certain MassDOT funding considerations if appropriate. A written letter of support is included in this proposal.
5. **Merrimack Valley Planning Commission (MVPC) Support:** In addition to Alex Johnson and Michael Davis' ongoing participation with the MVPC Georgetown Branch Committee to align Groveland, Bradford, and Georgetown on their long-term connectivity, the MVPC has taken an active role in voicing their support for Groveland's project. In addition to attending and having a voice at a public Board of Selectmen meeting in March 2015, the Chairman of the MVPC wrote a letter of

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support specifically calling out the feasibility of Groveland receiving the public grants/funds it seeks for construction. This coming from the body who directly controls the transportation infrastructure funding for our region, this is a powerful testament to our project's viability.

6. **Better understanding of trail maintenance needs and establishment of 501.3c:** as reinforced by respected individuals and Town bodies, OSTC agrees that a funded maintenance plan will be critical. Project leaders have researched options and are greatly encouraged by solutions accomplished by nearby Towns with comparable projects (i.e., Danvers, Salisbury, Newburyport) – all of which have shared with us how the physical and monetary resources required for annual maintenance are relatively minimal, and easily offset by simple fundraising and volunteerism. In these three towns, mile-marker sponsorships (with funds raised from local businesses, families, and individuals) more than cover the expenses and that contracted help, and minimal volunteer efforts are more than enough to handle the work itself. Physical work includes bi-annual brush trimming and other minor vegetation control measures (e.g., grass mowing). OSTC anticipates no reason why we cannot responsibly approach maintenance in a similar manner for our project, as in Towns like Danvers and Salisbury. To prepare for our ability to collect donations, we have established non-profit status and created a 501.3c entity in "The Friends of the Groveland Community Trail".

Project leaders are on track or ahead of schedule with previously suggested timelines and anticipate a MassDOT project number to be assigned in early 2015, which will allow us to formally be placed in the MassDOT funding queue.

Public sentiment remains positive. In addition to growing awareness and engagement on our project's Facebook Page (500+ likes), it was evident that throughout the Public Forums in 2014 and 2015, there have been no major dissension from abutters or other residents.

OSTC encourages this committee to again recall the strong public sentiment expressed in the 2010 Open Space Survey (see attached), where residents overwhelming supported Open Space for recreational development in our Town and individually called out this rail trail project as a top priority.

We have again attached letters of support (previously submitted and confirmed to be still withstanding) from respected Town organizations and regional non-profits, which further echo sentiment of strong public support.

Lastly and perhaps most significant is that Groveland is still very well-positioned to be a recipient of multiple millions of publically available dollars to construct the trail once a 100% design plan is complete. Our informed estimates hold that Groveland's complete funding of the 100% design plan work will yield an eightfold to tenfold return from MassDOT to construct the trail. By including the requested funds for this *trail-extension*, not only is our project more complete in its MassDOT submission, Groveland will realize a direct cost savings by not having to open a new project submission at a later date. From the beginning, connectivity with the Bradford Rail Trail has been a critical component, so we believe including now is the most fiscally responsible approach.

We ask that this committee give careful consideration to our request and to allow the public conversation to advance by way of a warrant article for the April 2015 Town Meeting and allow the people to vote on whether or not to commit these additional CPA funds to continue this project.

Comprehensive details can always be found at www.GrovelandCommunityTrail.org and Facebook.com/GrovelandCommunityTrail

Sincerely,



Michael Davis

Member, Groveland Open Space and Trails Committee



Alex Johnson

Chairman, Groveland Open Space and Trails Committee

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A. Applicant Information

Name of Applicant: Groveland Open Space and Trails Committee (OSTC)
Contact Name: Michael Davis
Mailing Address: 183 Main Street
City: Groveland
State: MA
Zip Code: 01834
Daytime Phone: Mike: 603-674-5341
Email Address: md91180@gmail.com

B. Location of Project

- Name of Project: Groveland Community Trail
- Address of Project: National Grid utility Right of Way (ROW):
 - Off-road trail segment: Parcels, 42-062-0, 24-008-A, 49-022-0 (1.95 miles of utility corridor running from 441 Main Street at Haverhill border, to King Street at Georgetown border)
 - THIS REQUEST SPECIFICALLY: The parcel of National Grid's ROW bisecting parcels 24-8 and 24-9

C. Funding Information

- CPA Category: (Include all that apply):
 - Open space **Yes**
 - Historic preservation **Yes**
 - Recreation **Yes**
 - Community housing **No**

D. Project Cost

- CPA funds requested for CY 14/15: \$150,000 (**APPROVED APRIL 2014**)
- CPA funds requested for CY 15/16: \$150,000 (**APPROVED APRIL 2015**)
- CPA funds requested for CY 16/17: \$55,300 (or \$140,750: see Proposal 2 of 2)
- MassDOT government funds to be awarded: Multiple millions of dollars for construction after 100% design plan is paid by Groveland

E. Project Information

1. Description

As proposed, the Groveland Community Trail will be a 3.25 mile, shared-use, non-motorized path – on-road/sidewalk from Town Hall to 441 Main Street, continuing off-road, along National Grid's utility ROW, to its intersection with King Street. When completed, the trail will connect many important town assets and resources, while creating near-term opportunity to unite Groveland with a larger regional trail network. Funds requested in this proposal are solely for the advancement of the 1.95 mile off-road trail segment.

2. Goals

Overall, The Groveland Community Trail will:

- **Create a lasting resource and means of pride for our community**
- **Connect multiple community assets** by pedestrian transportation (e.g., Bagnall School, Perry Park Nursery School, future Center Street Greenway site, Shanahan Field, the Pines Recreation Area, Town Hall Complex, Haverhill via Bates Bridge) by means of pedestrian and bicycle transportation (e.g., walking, biking, wheelchair)
- **Offer positive outdoor experiences all ages and abilities with scenic, healthy, and safe year-round transportation & recreation** – walkers, joggers, bicyclists, families with children in strollers, cross-country skiers, snow-shoers, wheelchair users, and anyone else seeking alternative modes of transportation to multiple schools & recreational fields, municipal facilities, other open space, and Haverhill commercial resources (i.e., Rivers Edge Plaza) via Bates Bridge.
- **Create an opportunity to connect into a larger, vibrant regional trail network**, most notably the Border to Boston Trail in Georgetown, which is currently under development, and the Bradford Rail Trail in Haverhill.

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3. Community Need

As the 2010 Open Space Survey overwhelmingly indicated (see attached), residents are passionate about preserving and developing open space for recreational purposes. Most notably:

- **Question 12** which asked "*Please check off the top five recreation facilities you feel are needed*" whereas more than 55% of respondents specifically noted the "rail trail on old railroad bed" as a priority (#1 of 20 options).
- **Question 4E** which asked "*How important is it to you to preserve open space for recreation purposes?*" whereas more than 85% responded "Somewhat Important" or "Very Important" (22% and 63% respectively).
- **Question 4B** which asked "*How important is it to you to preserve: Places of historical interest?*" whereas 78% responded "Somewhat Important" or "Very Important" (31% and 47% respectively)

Beyond Groveland, there exists a vibrant regional & national movement to transform abandoned rail and utility corridors into places of healthy, scenic and safe community recreation. Groveland itself sits uniquely adjacent to a high-priority MassDOT-funded trail project – the Border To Boston Trail in Georgetown. It is this trail that Groveland will have ability to link into directly, which will extend Groveland's direct connectivity to multiple other towns (e.g., Salisbury, Danvers, Boxford, Topsfield, Peabody). We also sit adjacent to a to-be-defined, multi-town project in the Merrimack River Trail as well as a neighboring effort in Haverhill, the Bradford Rail Trail.

As noted in a recent draft of the Master Plan for the Town of Groveland, there is a clear case for the need for better and alternative transportation. Chapter 8 of the Town's draft Master Plan discusses transportation and stipulates that the primary goal should be to "Construct and maintain a town-wide transportation system that provides for safe and efficient movement of goods and people, and meets the travel needs of all citizens." The second goal is to "Encourage alternative and energy conserving modes of transportation including walking and biking."

- The plan then lays out 6 specific proposed actions to work towards the goal including #1 "Design a town-wide transportation plan that includes roads, public transit, truck routes, bikeways, equestrian and hiking trails," and #3 "Insure the availability of sidewalks and handicapped access where needed for pedestrian access to public facilities."

We are confident that The Groveland Community Trail will help to directly satisfy a number of town's transportation needs and objectives as laid out in the Master Plan – the trail would facilitate pedestrian, biking and hiking activities, including enhanced handicapped transportation and access to a number of town facilities

4. Community Support

The most significant proof of support to date is the support received at April 2014 and April 2015 Town Meetings, where residents supported warrant articles to commit an initial \$150,000 and then another \$150,000 respectively of existing CPA funds to fund design planning.

Additional signals of community support are:

- Written letters of support (see attached) were provided by the Groveland Conservation Commission, Groveland OSTC, the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission, and Essex National Heritage.
- Written letter of support (see attached) from Senator Bruce Tarr and Representative Lenny Mirra outlining their offer to help if so desired in the future
- Relevant sentiments from 2010 Open Space Survey (see attached)
- 500+ supporters have "Liked" our Facebook page as of December 2015 – Facebook continues to be a strong communication tool for project leaders to engage community supporters.

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5. Timeline

If the requested warrant article is approved and a YES vote achieved at April's 2015 Town Meeting, the OSTC would continue on track with the following -term timeline:

Completed:

1. **April 2014:** Town Meeting Article PASSED to appropriate \$150,000 of existing CPA funds to begin design plans for off-road trail segment
2. **July 2014:** title work for National Grid ROW confirmed by attorney – no encumbrances
3. **July 2014:** RFP and engineer partner selection process completed – FST awarded contract
4. **November 2014:** wetlands flagging completed
5. **December 2014:** field survey began, with entry-permission granted from National Grid for ROW
6. **January 2015:** field survey completed
7. **February 2015:** 25% & 10% Design Plans for the off-road and on-road trail segments, respectively, are completed
8. **March 2015:** public forums with BOS, abutting property owners, others – led by OSTC, with FST – to introduce and review draft 25% design plan – thereafter, finalizing and submitting to MassDOT and National Grid *
9. **April 2015:** Town Meeting Warrant Article PASSED to appropriate \$150,000 of existing CPA funds to pay for 100% design plan for off-road trail segment from King St to Main Street

To Be Completed (all dates are estimates):

10. **April 2016:** OSTC request for ~\$55,300 to complete design of *trail-extension*
11. **Between 2015-16:** off-road trail segment inserted into TIP, assigned MassDOT project ID
12. **Between 2016-19:** 75%, 100% design plan, and final PS&E completed with MassDOT and National Grid
13. **Between 2017-19:** finalize 99 year lease agreement with National Grid for ROW development
14. **2019-20:** public construction funds appropriated by MassDOT to Groveland Community Trail project
15. **2019-20:** public bid and final selection for construction engineer
16. **2020+:** construction of The Groveland Community Trail

6. Implementation / Project Management

Groveland OSTC members Michael Davis and Alex Johnson will continue leading as project managers, with professional support from OSTC's engineer partner Fay Spofford & Thorndike. Michael & Alex continue to demonstrate a passion for this project, have developed strong community and regional support networks, and are more than capable of advancing the project in a direction of success. The Town's Finance Director, Denise Dembkoski, supports all efforts, and handles all legal and monetary matters.

Before 2015 Town Meeting, OSTC and FST will host up to four public forums to engage uniquely interested parties (e.g., abutting property owners, public officials, Whitestone Village) and the public at large to inform them of the engineering design process and to ensure the trail is built to our residents' desired standards and in coordination with other transportation projects in the Town..

Our engineer partner (FST) is well-suited to complete 100% design plan requirements, with a proven ability to adhere to the stringent requirements of MassDOT National Grid. They are also the design partner for the very-similar Border to Boston project in Georgetown.

7. Success Factors

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Success will continue to be defined by achieving the milestones outlined in the Timeline above – singularly most important being this requested warrant article for vote at Town Meeting 2015.

In last year's proposal for the 2014 warrant article, success was defined as:

- A YES vote at April 2014 Town Meeting – ACCOMPLISHED
- A clean title search on the off-road trail segment – ACCOMPLISHED
- Bid for and select engineer partner – ACCOMPLISHED

Specifically, **success in calendar year 2015 will include the following:**

1. **A YES vote at April 2015 Town Meeting for \$150,000** to complete a 100% design plan for off-road trail segment
2. **Formally submit 25% design plan to National Grid** to begin conversations re: design considerations
3. **Formally submit 25% design plan to MassDOT** to secure project ID number and begin conversations re: design and funding considerations
4. Pending success for #1 above, **be considered for MassDOT TIP programming and begin 100% design plan efforts for National Grid ROW**

8. Budget

The total estimated investment (inclusive of funds contributed by MassDOT) for this project is upwards of \$4m-\$5m – the vast majority (90+%) paid for via publically available MassDOT funds. The estimated budget for Groveland holds at ≈\$500,000 (\$300,000 for off-road segment; \$200,000 for on-road segment) and will be requested entirely, over stages, by CPA funds – all Town-invested dollars would be applied directly to design costs and title work. Estimates are as follows:

- **To be awarded MassDOT construction funds, Groveland must pay for:**
 - Title work – originally estimated to be no more than \$25,000 (*actual amount was less than \$10,000*)
 - All design costs – approximately \$500,000
 - \$125,000 (APPROVED APRIL 2014) to complete a 25% design plan for National Grid ROW trail segment and a 10% design plan for on-road trail segment
 - \$125,000 (REQUESTED FOR APRIL 2015) to complete 100% design plan for ROW segment
 - ESTIMATED \$200,000 (ESTIMATED TO BE REQUESTED APRIL 2016+) to complete 100% design plan for on-road trail segment
- **MassDOT would then pay for:** all construction costs (multiple millions of dollars) through their TIP, Project Development Process, and/or other state funding programs focused on alternative transportation.

9. Other Funding / Matching Maintenance

OSTC feels that CPA funds are most appropriate to handle 100% of Groveland's long-term investment for design plans.

As noted throughout this proposal, Groveland is responsible for 100% of the design costs for this project – estimated to be in the range of \$500,000 – to demonstrate its commitment to the project. **When a 100% design plan is completed, our Town will be in a position to receive an eightfold to tenfold return on that investment by way of publically available funds from MassDOT.** These multiple millions of dollars from MassDOT would pay for 100% of the construction costs to build the Groveland Community Trail.

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10. Maintenance:

As outlined in our cover letter: project leaders have researched options and are greatly encouraged by solutions accomplished by nearby Towns with comparable projects (i.e., Danvers, Salisbury) – both of whom have outlined to us, in detail, how the physical and monetary resources required for annual maintenance are relatively minimal, and easily offset by basic fundraising and volunteerism. In both Danvers and Salisbury, mile-marker sponsorships (with funds raised from local businesses, families, and individuals) more than cover the expenses and that minimal volunteer efforts are more than enough to handle the work itself. Physical work includes bi-annual brush trimming and other minor vegetation control measures (e.g., grass mowing). OSTC anticipates no reason why we cannot responsibly approach maintenance in a similar manner for our project, as in Towns like Danvers and Salisbury.

As further encouraged by Essex National Heritage “trail stewards are repeatedly surprised by the number and type of people who offer assistance (time, money, equipment) after the trail is built” and the OSTC is confident in Groveland residents living up to that standard.

11. Resources

For the most information about the project, visit: www.GrovelandCommunityTrail.org

Groveland Community Trail Facebook Page: www.Facebook.com/GrovelandCommunityTrail

Fay Spofford & Thorndike homepage: www.FSTinc.com

2010 Groveland Open Space Survey: (see attached)

12. Include documentation that shows you have control or plan to gain control over the site, such as Purchase and Sales Agreement, option, or deed.

- With respect to the “on-road” segment along Main Street, we would be relying solely on public roads and sidewalks already controlled by the town of Groveland.
- With respect to the ROW trail segment, attorney John Troy confirmed National Grid freely owns 100% of the required lands for the Groveland Community Trail – the discussion with National Grid will take multiple years, but generally ends with the applicant’s permission to use the right-of-way being granted by way of a long term lease. Georgetown has successfully completed this process with FST, which will provide a blue print for how we will approach.

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January 9, 2015

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SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS – Following Pages

Letters of Support

2010 Open Space Survey Results