

**CAMDEN RIVERWALK and PUBLIC LANDING PROJECT**  
**PUBLIC FORUM #1**  
**Minutes of Meeting – Comments Portion**  
**April 1, 2013**

The 120 or so attendees broke out into 9 groups led by facilitators from the Project Working Group. The groups were asked to address the following questions:

- a. Where are the Very Special Places in Camden, for you, especially within the Riverwalk corridor, between Megunticook Lake and the Harbor?
- b. What are your concerns with a pathway system and what would you like the Design Team to know as they begin to look at the design solutions?
- c. What pedestrian details or concepts have you seen in other communities that you think might be successful here?
- d. What do you think are the best ways to encourage people to use a pathway system in Camden?

The following is a compilation of the various groups' strongest thoughts and feelings on those issues.

**SPECIAL PLACES and WAYS TO MAKE THEM MORE ATTRACTIVE TO USERS**

*Shirrtail Point Park:*

- The park has a longstanding history as a local swimming hole, and it should be improved to make it more swimmable – don't allow motorboats in this section of the lake
- Having a safe way for children to walk or bike to the park is something locals have wanted for a long time; the often-discussed sidewalk up Washington Street should be completed now
- It would be great to have a trail from Shirrtail to Seabright along the lake as well as a sidewalk down Mountain Street

*Seabright Dam and Seabright Park:*

- The dam site presents a good educational opportunity to learn about the role that dams played in Camden's history as well as providing a good rest stop
- The Town-owned park already has two trails and this is an opportunity to interconnect – make use of existing
- This is beautiful site that should be better utilized
- The Town should allow swimming at the dam again so swimmers can go from Shirrtail to the dam once more
- The trail through this area should be natural surface
- There are lots of wetlands behind Coastal Mountains Land Trust that must be protected

*Washington Street Bridge:*

- This should be a focal point along the trail, with the river views accented

*Tannery Site:*

- Nearly every group said the Town should keep all or part of the town-owned site for public use:
  - The site is mid-way between the two trail ends and would be a perfect trail “hub” or center point with room for informational kiosks, maps, picnic tables and benches
  - The site is a good place for children to have access to the river for interactive educational opportunities to interest them in rivers and water
- There is room on this site for mixed development and public use, and that should be considered; or
- The entire site should be a recreational area – a park

*Gould Street to the Mill Pond:*

- This stretch of the river is a great place for boaters; that use might want to be encouraged, but no motorboats on river

*Mary Taylor Middle School:*

- Take advantage of all the educational opportunities to link the school curriculum to the river and the pathway
- This is an excellent opportunity to connect the school to the rest of Town – to make Town walkable for children and families

*Farmer’s Market:*

- A favorite destination that needs better signage and more attention brought to the fact that the market is there and when
- It would be nice to have the path follow the river from behind the mill at the first dam, on to the second dam, then to the waterfalls and to the front of the mill

*The Public Landing:*

- A perfect spot for the pathway to begin or end
- The public will be weighing in on this area of the project on April 22, but some comments were made this evening about connecting the harbor to the river by way of the Riverwalk, and the opportunities that would present to connect the entire community and its neighborhoods to the whole of the downtown

*The Pathway as a Whole:*

- The Design Team should not feel bound to follow the course of the river between Shirrtail Point and the Public Landing. There are many opportunities to connect these special places and they should look at all of them
- If this is to be a phased opportunity, with different sections completed over time, the first portions of the pathway should begin on Town-owned property as soon as possible
- The vision for the pathway may be something that falls into place over time. If certain properties are not accessible at this time, plans can be made to look to the future and be able to act if the property changes hands. If the Town buys an easement for access, the risk to the Town of owning this access must be considered

CONCERNS THE DESIGN TEAM SHOULD KEEP IN MIND

*Abutting Property Owner Privacy:*

- Concern for protecting the privacy of riverfront property owners was highlighted by every group. They should be contact right away – many are concerned and have no idea what to expect. The Team must address the fear property owners have that the trail would diminish their enjoyment of their property and be an intrusion onto their property, and that it would diminish their property values. Give them good information - they need to be brought on board with the project from the beginning
- Screening the view of the property from the trail, and vice versa, will be an important design factor. Involve the property owners in these discussions about design
- There is a perception that the trail's proximity will lower property values of riverfront property owners because of this issue, but the opposite has been shown to be true. Where there are existing pathways, property values have been found to be higher the closer to the pathway properties are located; not all attendees agreed with this premise
- There are places where the terrain may be perfect to bring the trail close to the water, but in some of those instances a trail would come much too close to a residence and there would be no way to protect privacy. This is especially so from Rawson Avenue on down the river to the Town property and the mill dams. Along Mt. Battie Street there are many property owners on small lots and the banks are steep in many places; sidewalks along the street would be better here than a pathway by the water
- As the pathway is developed and enhanced various concerns should diminish, and as property owners themselves enjoy the pathway, they will realize that there is not the intrusion onto their property they feared

*Amenities:*

- Restrooms - where along the trail? The Tannery or other Town-owned property
- Lots of sitting and looking places along the trail
- Water bottle stops

*Appearance:*

- Attendees were very concerned that the pathway is not obtrusive, and that it blend into the surroundings. It should not be overbuilt, but look inviting as a natural part of the community
- If the pathway is made wide enough for shared uses it could dominate the landscape and be offensive
- Regular maintenance will be needed to maintain the pathway appearance – who will be responsible for this work and expense

*Economic Impact:*

- Be mindful of the impact this could have on small businesses by taking foot traffic away from their storefronts

*Environmental Impacts:*

- Preventing erosion and run-off into the river was a constant concern
- The river can get high and flood in certain areas where it could damage the pathway or cause erosion
- Plantings will be necessary in order to stabilize the pathway and banking
- In addition to surfacing materials being environmentally friendly, there were concerns expressed about the challenging grade changes over portions of the pathway and what would be done to control erosion in these steep places if a path were put in place

*Lighting:*

- Will there be any lighting? What kinds of lights? How many and where would they be located? How late into the day/evening would the pathway be used
- Lighting would be necessary for safety in some places, but that would seem to be an intrusion on near-by homeowners' privacy
- Perhaps the only lighting should be in areas in the downtown portion of the pathway where there will be parking for the pathway provided

*Maintenance:*

- Who will be responsible for maintenance? The Town must commit to repairing the sidewalks they already have to make them safe, and they must commit to continuing the maintenance of the infrastructure that will be theirs
- Trash receptacles will be needed along the pathway – someone will need to empty them and pick up the areas in general every day
- What kind of winter maintenance will be required
- Who pays

### *Parking:*

- There may need to be places to park along portions of the trail in order to make it accessible to seniors and others who cannot walk too far from parking to reach the pathway. It may be possible to create a couple of parking spaces in some areas, but not all
- The Tannery site is a good mid-way point for parking for those wanting to walk only half the trail
- The middle school parking lot is vacant in the summer and could be use for pathway parking (as well as parking for downtown when needed)

### *Pets:*

- Concerns about dogs walking on paths (leash required?) and property owners' dogs in yards – possibility of conflicts
- Concerns about dogs in general on trails along the river

### *Safety:*

- The issue of whether or not bicycles should have access to the pathway will be a major topic of discussion as the project progresses. There were those saying the entire pathway should be accessible to bikes, and those who believe it will be difficult to safely share some portions of the pathway between bikes and walkers. There will be two questions to answer regarding bikes – if and where
- How will the pathway be policed to ensure users are safe and property is not being vandalized
- Winter safety along the pathway could be an issue in steeper areas and where the pathway comes along river; the river may look frozen and safe to walk on, but it isn't
- There may be places where fences are needed for safety and privacy – they must be maintained as well
- Will the pathway be accessible 24 hours a day- how will it be made safe if it is

### *Signage:*

- Some groups wanted lots of signs; some groups think there are already too many signs in Town. Some groups wanted signs that are colorful and stand out; some groups want signs that blend into the surroundings and are minimally intrusive. All groups agreed that signage is important
- Signs downtown should be wayfinding making the pathway easy to find with a theme for the signage
- Signs along the outer pathway should be small simple directional signs

*Surface Material(s):*

- Portions of the pathway must be accessible, but the terrain is such that there will be portions that are not. Accessible portions must have a surface that will accommodate wheels, whether it is a wheelchair or a stroller, but please, no asphalt
- The choice of surface materials may be a way to encourage – or to discourage -- some users of “speedy wheeled vehicles” like trail bikes and skateboards
- People want environmentally friendly surfaces, especially in areas that go through woods or along the river itself; things like cedar chips, bluestone, or crushed stone, or perhaps a wooden walkway in places where there are sensitive areas

WAYS TO LET PEOPLE KNOW ABOUT THE PATHWAY and ENCOURAGE ITS USE

- *Educational Highlights:* Take advantage of every opportunity along the pathway to create an educational component and tell the importance of that particular site to the history and economy of Camden using pedestal plaques, signage or pictures as appropriate. In addition, information can be provided about wildlife and plant life at each site, about river preservation efforts, and about wetlands and the role they play in flood control
- *Family Walks:* Hold an annual Family Walk with guides pointing out highlights. Encourage family walk times
- *Kiosks:* Located on the Public Landing and at the Tannery site as well as other places downtown where the pathway can be accessed
- *Maps and Brochures:* They can be designed to highlight special points of interest and where they can be accessed along the trail.
- *Mini destinations”:* This concept would link various points along the trail to encourage those who would not walk longer portions of the trail to chose a walk linking one point of interest to another instead
- *Public Involvement in the Process:* Continue to generate excitement about the project as it progresses, not just in the design stage, by involving the public in continued discussions about the vision for the pathway as it evolves
- *Recreational Opportunities:* Create other opportunities for recreation along the trail, including: Improve swimming facilities at Shirttail; keeping the river stocked with fish and create places from which to fish; stock the river with trout below the lake creating access for boating; and making the Tannery site into a public park
- *Social Media:* Provide QR codes linking to maps and historical and educational information highlighting spots along the pathway

- *Tour guides:* Volunteers could offer guided tours of sections of the pathway discussing historical and other areas of importance
- *Trail System:* Create an inter-linking series of trails that will eventually go to the Snow Bowl and to the State Park to connect to the trails at these sites

#### OTHER PATHWAYS as MODELS

Portland's Back Bay was considered by many as a good model for connecting special areas that is accessible from many places

Brunswick multi-use trail is wide enough to have room for bikes on the outside while other users have the inside to themselves

Two-way trails in Boston around Storrow Drive

Lewiston-Auburn and Topsham have river walks that fit into the communities very nicely

Keene, New Hampshire has a nice river walk right downtown

Bar Harbor's downtown trail is a good model

Bradbury Mountain State Park has a very good system of maps and signs

Project documents are available on the Town's website (<http://www.camdenmaine.gov>) under the Riverwalk and Public Landing tab.