



Town of Topsfield

TOPSFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

Rail Trail Committee

Nov. 4, 2017

Mass. Trails Conference

Joe Geller, Chairman, Topsfield Rail Trail Committee

NIMBY Presentation

- Topsfield Selectmen created (May 9, 2005) the “Rail Trail Committee” (TRTC)
- Topsfield Linear Common - total length- 3.9 miles
- Northern ½ of the utility corridor is owned by National Grid, southern by the MBTA.
- Selectmen signed the MBTA lease- liability and 21E issues have been made palatable by changes in state law. Still waiting for National Grid to offer a lease (we have a license).
- First official meeting of the TRTC is May 26th 2005.
- From NIMBY statements that it would cost the Town a fortune to build and maintain the Rail Trail Committee said it would not cost the town anything to build and maintain. That has been the case. Funds have come from grants and donations with labor from the volunteers.

NIMBY Guidelines that worked for Topsfield

- Important to publicize trail committee public forums be it either "friends" or "Selectmen" appointed.
- Keep a list of all meetings, newspaper articles and social media.
- Our experience is that NIMBYs do not acknowledge corrections to their misinformation statements. It is important to correct misinformation in written form.
- Interview trail abutters to get their concerns. Document this for future rebuttals.
- After many open forums and meeting with the Selectmen the NIMBY's tried to delay the trail with a warrant article at town meeting. It was voted down. Then, a few days later, a non-binding referendum at town vote handily passed.

- Swampscott – At an open forum the NIMBY lawyer said housing values go down by 10% as soon as the trail is opened.

Topsfield home sales for houses abutting the Rail Trail vs. Non-abutters from April 2012 to April 2017.

Location	Average days to sale	Average list price	Average Sale price	\$ Discount	% Discount
Trail Abutters (18 homes)	37	\$ 565,994	\$ 557,739	\$ 8,255	1.5%
Non-abutters (296 homes)	58	\$ 590,957	\$ 572,514	\$ 18,443	3.2%

The above indicates abutter homes sell a lot faster and there is less than half the discount from offering price. Attached is a pretty poor map of the homes sold on the Rail Trail (in red) vs. off (green). The map scale is too small to see all the sold homes.

*This data is similar to that from Craig Della Penna. From 2005 to 2009.

NIMBY Stories

1. An abutter ~200 ft. from trail worried about peeping tom's looking in a bathroom window on the 2nd floor.
2. Same abutter loves trails on the Cape and Islands. They go with grandchildren. AT a public forum they said the trail would be OK in Topsfield if people from town didn't use it.
3. Same abutters seen on the TLC trail – “too bad it is so short”. See picture.
4. Another abutter - until their kid's chickens were on the trail and people started buying eggs! They build steps to access the trail as did several other abutters both NIMBY and supporters.
5. My husband and I were vocally against the trail. Now that it is built we walk it everyday and it is "not so bad".
6. Would not let my girls walk to the school. Trail too dark and overgrown. Not safe. Trail built – “it is the safest way for them to get to school. Safer than the sidewalks and a more direct route”.
7. House for sale - sold from sign in back yard.
8. Many new houses sold because people wanted close trail access and better resale values. NIMBYs sold their houses faster and closer to their asking price.

Excerpts from the 2017 Topsfield Open Space and Recreation Survey

We love the proximity of beautiful conservation areas for outdoor recreation- Ipswich River Wildlife Sanctuary, Willowdale, Greenbelt properties, etc. We also live right on the **rail trail** and very much value that path as a place to walk and enjoy nature- for us, the **rail trail** was a primary selling point of the house we bought when we moved here 1.5 years ago.

The **rail trail**, while fought initially, is now the most popular area of town to gather.

Anxious for Topsfield Linear Common Park (**Rail Trail**) to be completed to Boxford and beyond. It would be an honor to have the future East Coast Greenway pass through Topsfield as our rail trail is part of the Maine to Florida Route.

Much of this survey seems to want increased \$\$ investment by the town. I don't mind investment, but would like to hear about tradeoffs so that any proposition stays tax neutral. For inspiration- the **rail trail**.

Sports fields are what is needed in town at this point, we don't need to develop trails that will not be maintained (the various other groups do an excellent job of that). The **Rail Trail** has been an incredible addition to the town.

More sidewalks are needed to connect to our existing fantastic **Rail Trail** & Schools

I think the **rail trail** was a great addition to our town.