

New England Mountain Bike Association To Build Trail Platform At Mashpee River Woodlands

By LAUREN SURBEY



Mashpee River Reservation and Woodlands

GENE M. MARCHAND/ENTERPRISE

The Cape Cod Chapter of New England Mountain Bike Association (NEMBA) presented a proposal to the Conservation Commission last week to build a viewing platform at the Mashpee River Woodlands for those visiting to see the view of the river.

“We are a service organization as well as recreation,” Lev Malakhoff, vice president of the Cape Cod Chapter of NEMBA, told the commission on June 26. “We like to contribute to communities that we are involved in. When we have been enjoying the wonderful trails

along the Mashpee River Woodland area, we noticed the great vistas that you see and the views of the river.”

Malakhoff said that NEMBA is an organization of over 10,000 people. The Cape Cod Chapter has over 250 members; they have 2,000 Facebook friends that are also involved in NEMBA activities.

“We have had experience as a club in creating projects in other towns to create destinations,” Malakhoff said. He referenced one that the organization built at the West Barnstable Conservation Area in 1999.

“The view from this deck can show you all the way to the Pilgrim Monument in Provincetown,” Malakhoff said. “We think Mashpee is also a deserving community.”

Past decks the organization has built have steps rather than ramps, Malakhoff said.

“We just weren’t really thinking forward at the time of constructing those,” Malakhoff said. “Steps are a little bit more complicated to build, but they’re also a barrier to access for some of the folks using the trails.”

The proposed platform NEMBA plans to build around Mashpee River would include a ramp.

“The proposal that I’m going to talk about today is to create a very similar design with a bench on either side, about a 14-by-14-foot footprint, but would also have a ramp access instead of steps,” Malakhoff said. “It’s going to be easier to build and it will also make it easier for folks of whatever ability to gain access to the view.”

Malakhoff said no trees would be cut down to build the platform. At most, brushwork would be needed to trim down vegetation. A small pickup truck would travel to the area to deliver materials for construction.

“I think what we’re really looking to do is create a destination for folks that are walking, hiking, running, to have a reason to come out and visit this wonderful area,” Malakhoff said. “We feel it’s important for what I call responsible public use, which is passive recreation, for non-motorized users out into natural areas. It has eyes on the properties.”

He said that motorcycles in the woodlands often do not want to be seen, and this platform would help deter motorcyclists in the area.

Barnstable County resident and mountain bike association member Chris Young spoke on the proposed platform: “I am a resident in Barnstable County and an adaptive mountain biker since 1996, when the only way to get around was to use a chairlift at a ski area to get to the top, and then we had gravity assisted bikes,” Young said. “I believe there’s more than 1,000 miles of trails [on the Cape]. I’m on a goal to ride every single one of them. These

trails are going to allow accessible use of the outdoors and the inclusion of a ramp in this structure, the addition of a ramp will make it possible for myself and everybody else. There will be no limitations to use to see this new view and this new location.”

Former commission chairman Paul Colombo said that the project requires a notice of intent and a site visit in order to begin the construction.

“The [conservation] agents are mentioning that it should be an NOI [Notice of Intent] filing and it should at least be staked out so we can do a site visit and know exactly the location where that’s going to be,” Colombo said. “We’d like to take a look at it just to make sure we’re good.”

Commission member Alex Zollo suggested making this process easy for NEMBA.

“This is a group trying to do a good thing, donating time and money,” Zollo said. “I don’t want to make this a hard, arduous process for them.”

Newly elected vice chairwoman Sarah Thornbrugh agreed.

“We’re also expanding equitable access to the conservation lands here on Mashpee, which is incredibly important,” Thornbrugh said. “Maybe we could find a way to have the staff involved to make sure the conservation interests are maintained throughout construction.”

Malakhoff said that there would be a building inspector involved in the process of the platform’s design and construction.

“We should follow a process here,” Colombo said. “In the past when Lev [Malakhoff] has come before us to cut out some of the trails, we’ve had site visits. As a bare minimum, I’d like to see a site visit and be able to look exactly where this is going.”

Commission member Marjorie Clapprood emphasized that the commission should positively endorse the project.

“Don’t we also want to give a positive endorsement to the applicant and the organization?” Clapprood said. “I’m really impressed with the work they do and the quality of the upkeep. I think it’s important that we give that public endorsement.”

Conservation Agent Andrew McManus also informed the commission on the project requirements.

“The only reason we recommended a notice [of intent] is just because the resource areas were at the riverfront, but whatever the commission is comfortable with,” McManus said. “I’m all for making this process as easy as possible. It’s up to the commission as far as what you feel is a suitable process.”

The commission agreed on scheduling a site visit for the proposed platform at the Mashpee River.

“I will shoot an email tomorrow and we will start scheduling,” Assistant Conservation Agent Daniel Kent said on June 26. “I will also say from a philosophical viewpoint, this is also a microstep in urging and engaging into a green tourist ecosystem here in town. The trail systems here at the Mashpee River are fantastic and I have to congratulate NEMBA for stepping up every year to maintain the trails as well.”