

# Boulder Junction bike trail committee submits request

Konopacki: 'We have a lot of work to do'

By Brian Jopek

OF THE LAKELAND TIMES

For the past two years, Boulder Junction's North Creek Loop Trail Committee has been working on planning and fundraising for a bike trail loop.

Nearly every month, Boulder Junction resident Barb Konopacki has been the committee's spokesperson providing updates to the town board at its regular meetings.

She began her update last week by saying it was August of 2017 when the town board was first approached to formally approve formation of the committee.

"We are asking permission to look at paving a trail along (County) Highway H, along the intersection of (Hwys.) K and H to North Creek Road, which is a total of 3.3 miles," Konopacki said and noted at that August 2017 meeting the town board granted permission for the committee to work toward that goal.

For the past two years, she said the committee has worked "step by step and methodically" on the project.

"We keep the town informed of everything we're doing," Konopacki said. "But we're at that

point right now where there are grants available and we need to start the grant application process."

She said the grants the committee could apply for are through the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, one of them a Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) grant.

The window for the TAP grant application, Konopacki said, is from Oct. 1 to Dec. 31 of this year.

"Three months might sound like a lot of time," she said. "But grants are extremely intensive and a lot of work and they require a lot of information. So, three months isn't a lot of time."

If awarded to the town, Konopacki said the TAP grant could cover 80% of the project's cost.

She said there are two other grants available through the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, both with windows in the application process of Jan. 1, 2020 to May 1, 2020.

"We're fairly certain a lot of the work we do now, up front, will carry over with similar information for the DNR," Konopacki. "To get this going ... these grants are very

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detailed and it's a ranking system in the review process. So, we're getting a lot of information from people who know how to write grants and what's important. We have a lot of work to do."

All three grants, she said, require a formal financial commitment from the town to complete the applications.

"Without this formal commitment from the Boulder Junction Town Board, this committee will be at a standstill to proceed with the grants," Konopacki said.

The total cost for the paved bike trail is \$875,000.

If a TAP grant would be awarded, that would leave \$175,000 the committee and town would have to come up with.

So far, Konopacki said the committee, through fundraising efforts, has raised around \$21,000 which means the rest — in the neighborhood of \$150,000 — would be the responsibility of the committee and the town.

"We feel that is very achievable with continued fundraising," she said. "But as we're out there fundraising this summer, we're finding people keep asking us, you know, 'What is the bottom line?' (and) what do we need. That's kind of hard to

answer until we get the grant process going."

Konopacki acknowledged the \$150,000 would be "a tough number," but would provide something "concrete" prospective donors could contribute to.

She said another key element of the grant application process was going to be a land use agreement for the trail between the town and the Vilas County Highway Department.

"We have a verbal (agreement), but we need to get it locked down," Konopacki said.

In summary, she said the committee feels as the town board looks at the 2020 budget, the consensus of the membership is funding for

the trail from the town could come from some of its share of room tax revenue.

It's understood, Konopacki said, there have been other requests submitted to the town for room tax funds.

"Please remember this committee has two years already invested in the completion of this project which is all about the future and the economy of Boulder Junction," she said.

Supervisor Jim Galloway, with his background in grant application writing as Vilas County Emergency Management director, volunteered to put grant applications together.

Former town chairman Jeff Long, there to offer some information regarding

another grant source through the DNR's stewardship program, said he believes "the committee is moving on the track they need to go on."

He said when the town previously pursued an 8/20 grant from the DNR, it received it.

Long said this particular stretch of bike trail will be more advantageous for the DNR than the earlier bike trail as it connects campgrounds directly to the town.

"They should have, and I'm sure they do have, a strong interest in trying to get this done," he said.

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