

Weston Agricultural Commission

Tuesday, January 10, 2017, 6pm, Weston Town Hall

Attending: Alex Anza, Julie Hyde, Ann Wiedie, Avery Chaplin, Diana Chaplin, Yet-Ming Chiang, Jerry Ikeda, Paul Penfield, Phyllis Halpern

Paul Penfield (Weston Rail Trail Committee) and Phyllis Halpern (Weston Historical Commission) visited to discuss Historic Railway Cattle Passes in Weston. There are four such passes in Weston, and one in Wayland, all on the abandoned rail line which Eversource will be converting to a driveable way and which towns are considering further improvement as multi-use (bike, walk, horse, etc.) These were constructed in the late 1800s and early 1900s to allow for livestock to get from one side of the tracks to the other, where farmers owned land on both sides of the tracks. The land would be fenced on either side, funneling animals to a single place where they could cross under the tracks.

Two of the passes in Weston are open-top (stringers overhead on which tracks lay), two are closed-top (concrete ceiling, a more modern design); the pass in Wayland is closed-top, nicer than either of the two closed-top passes in Weston.

Paul and Phyllis have asked Eversource to consider preservation of these passes, and Eversource is contemplating preservation of one in Weston; an open-top pass near Gun Club Lane. A curved diversion of the rail trail around the pass is proposed, with the tracks left in place for a short span across the pass. Wayland has asked Eversource to preserve their closed-top pass.

Paul and Phyllis asked that the Agricultural Commission write to Eversource to recommend both of these preservations. The letter would also be sent to both Weston and Wayland Conservation Commissions. Members of the AgCom agreed, and Yet-Ming will work on a draft.

Alex Anza suggested that to preserve the closed-top pass in Wayland a diversion might not be necessary. Instead a metal plate (as is used for temporary road repairs over utility holes, etc.) could be placed on the concrete, then covered over with earth and then the stone dust or other top layer.

Also requested was help to make a video regarding all aspects of rail trail preservation (there are many other points and objects of interest in addition to the cattle passes) and construction. Specifically, small cattle / calves would be appreciated to be filmed walking under the open-top pass – it is currently very low ceilinged due to sediment and trash which has built up underneath over time. Alex Anza may be able to assist with a suitable farm animal.

The Annual Report for the Agricultural Commission should be submitted soon. Julie Hyde will work on this.