

# Rail Trail Group Incorporates

By Myra Mayman and Alex Bernhard  
Friends Of The Northern Rail Trail

The Friends of the Northern Rail Trail in Merrimack County (FNRT/MC) met on Wednesday, December 15 at the Blackwater Ski Shop, Ed Dansereau hosting. Those present included Andover residents Alex Bernhard, Ed Dansereau, Tom Frantz, Myra Mayman, and Bob Ward; Danbury resident Phyllis Taylor, Andover Snowmobile Club (ASC) President Craig Mayo of Sanbornton, and ASC Director Steve Rosen of Hill.

The FNRT/MC has been organized to make the old Northern Line rail bed from Grafton to Boscawen into an unpaved path that will accommodate bicycling, walking, jogging, horseback riding, and wheelchairs. It will extend the current Northern Line Rail Trail that runs from West Lebanon to Grafton.

It's important that this unpaved trail be developed in conjunction with the snowmobilers, so it was especially helpful to have the ASC involved in this planning meeting.

Tom Frantz is working on an application for a Recreational Trail Grant, to be submitted on January 21. Bob Ward will attend the ASC's January 10 meeting to answer any questions.

The major challenge for both the ASC and FNRT/MC is how to deal with the "ballast," the 2-inch stones that now cover the Merrimack County portion of the disused rail bed. It provides excellent drainage for the trail, but it is a safety hazard for snowmobilers when the snow cover is low because it is kicked up by snowmobile treads, creating dangerous projectiles for following machines. It also makes the snow melt faster, which shortens the snowmobile season. For bicyclists, joggers, walkers, and wheelchairs it makes the trail simply impassable.

There was lengthy discussion about

the ballast, about how much of it can be pushed to one side, whether it can and should be covered with stone dust, and what kind of stone dust.

There was also a thorough discussion of where on the trail these improvements should be started. The consensus was that, if funded, the work should start in the most visible and accessible place on the trail. Behind the Andover Elementary/Middle School, near the ball park and Lawrence Street was cited as the first priority, or at the Highland Lake Channel in East Andover.

Alex Bernhard reported that Articles of Agreement have been sent to the New Hampshire Secretary of State to incorporate FNRT/MC. The following two new Directors were then elected:

Tom Frantz, an Andover resident who serves on the Andover Recreation Committee and the Master Plan Committee, and is Director of the Basketball Program for the Recreation Committee. He is known around town as Hannah's dad.

Phyllis Taylor of Danbury is a Commissioner of the Lakes Region Planning Commission and Vice Chair of the New Hampshire Department of Transportation Advisory Committee, as well as a member of the Danbury Planning Board. She was instrumental in the Blazing Star Grange's successful grant application for cleaning up the trail in Danbury.

Officers of the group were also elected:

- President: Bob Ward
- Vice President: Alex Bernhard
- Secretary: Myra Mayman
- Treasurer: Ed Dansereau

Anyone who wishes to get involved with this four-season trail development should contact Alex Bernhard at 735-5071. Everyone was encouraged to attend the ASC's fundraising supper at the Andover Elementary/Middle School on Saturday, January 29 at 5 PM.

## Budget from page 1

to this increase, including increases in:

- Negotiated salary for the staff
- Health insurance costs for the staff
- Number of students in Special Education
- Cost of providing Special Education services
- Contracted tuition rate for Andover students to attend Merrimack Valley High School

The Town budget request for 2005, as presently proposed by the Selectmen, is nearly level with 2004's funding. There are significant new expenditures in this budget, including funding for the reconstruction of the Sucker Brook Bridge on Dyer's Crossing Road and obtaining consulting assistance for creating a new Master Plan. But these increased expenses have been almost completely offset by economies in other portions of the budget.

No information is available regarding the amount of the assessment that the County will set for Andover for 2005. It is prudent to assume that it will increase as it always has, but there is no way to quantify it at this time.

From the above summary, it can be seen that the major increase in next year's appropriation request will be the School portion. Since the School budget represents about 67% of the

total appropriation, the 7.5% increase in the School budget will represent an increase of about 5.0%, or about \$0.60 per thousand dollars of valuation, on the tax bill received by each land owner. For a property assessed at \$100,000 this represents an increase of about \$60 over last year's tax bill.

## Public Hearings Inform Voters

The Budget Committee will hold two Public Hearings to give the public an opportunity to review the proposed budgets and to voice their opinions and suggestions.

The Andover School District budget will be presented and reviewed at the public hearing on Wednesday night January 12 at 7 PM at the Town Hall.

The Andover Town budget, along with the two Fire Department budgets and the Andover Village Water District budget, will be presented and reviewed at the public hearing on Wednesday night January 19 at 7 PM at the Town Hall.

Each voter is strongly urged to attend these public hearings, and to participate in formulating the proposed budgets for Andover. The Budget Committee is very interested in (and legally mandated to) receiving public input, and will take into consideration all that is presented at these hearings before finalizing its recommendations to be presented to the Town, District, and Precinct Meetings.

## Rink from page 1

hands on the freezing pipes, he said.

"It was just too much for me," he said.

Andover Fire Chief John Landry arrived at the scene and saw that he was going to need more help, he said. Fire departments are not authorized to handle toxic gases in their standard gear. Landry called in a second alarm. Departments from around the region and the Central New Hampshire HazMat Team from Concord responded.

Landry said members of the HazMat team wore specialized suits while they tightened packings around the leaking valve. A short while later, after opening doors and turning on the ventilation system, they entered the building again to test the air and declared it clear.

Landry said about 20 people were exposed to the leak and said they weren't

feeling well.

"We set up a triage spot where pretty much anyone that was exposed to it had to be checked out," he said.

Coach Jeff Neilsen and three teenagers were transported to the hospital as a precautionary measure.

Neilsen said he had gone in to try to grab some of the girls' stuff while they were crawling on their hands and knees into the parking lot because they still had their skates on.

Even though they could smell ammonia, Neilsen said, "we didn't really know what was going on. With a fire alarm, you don't really think of an ammonia leak."

Afterward, Neilsen was lightheaded and his chest felt tight. One of the EMTs convinced him to go get checked out, he said.

The three teens who went to the hospital were released without a problem.

See Rink on page 14

Matted prints available at Artisan's Workshop in New London



Great prices! An intimate look at local wildlife

by Rick Libbey

. 735-5323 or visit online @ www.moosemannaturephotos.com



**FLY FISHING OUTFITTERS**

**Open Saturdays 10:00 until 5:00**

ENTERING OUR 6<sup>TH</sup> YEAR

189, exit 11 East, Elkins Business Loop, next to Park-n-Go

Jon Lockwood, Owner & Guide: Call 603-526-9299 Anytime!

[www.nhfishguide.com](http://www.nhfishguide.com)



**MARSHALL'S GARAGE**

**HIGH-TECH CAPABILITIES**

**OLD-FASHIONED SERVICE & QUALITY**

Across the road from Elkins Beach on Pleasant Lake

Visit our Web site at [MarshallsGarage.com](http://MarshallsGarage.com) for discount coupons and car care tips

Save time and lower your stress! Have your vehicles repaired and serviced by local experts. Only ASE Certified and ASE Master Technicians with state-of-the-art equipment work on your vehicle. SUVs are our specialty.

**Free loaner cars or courtesy shuttle**

For an appointment: 526-6231 or [Dave@MarshallsGarage.com](mailto:Dave@MarshallsGarage.com)


