

Mountain Bike Halifax Association

Founding Meeting Minutes - 10 Oct 2018

Attendance:

Presenters

- Jeff White - Chair
- Bruce Lusby
- Charles Sutton
- Stephen Pelham
- Dan Flinn
- Jeff Vienneau - Minutes
- Adam Shore
- Tim Foster

Late Arrivals

- Mark Gentile
- Marc Pike

General Attendance: estimated at 40+ not including 10 presenters from working group.

Call to Order and Panel Introductions

Chair outlined how the meeting would proceed and introduced the panel. Each member of the panel gave a self introduction and background.

Association Introduction

The chair introduced the organization. *The following was taken from prepared notes for the benefit of those that may not have been in attendance:*

Who we are:

A volunteer-driven organization that strives to provide, preserve, and promote sustainable mountain biking in HRM.

In other words, this organization focuses **only on mountain biking, only in HRM.**

Who we are not:

Bicycle Nova Scotia, which has a much wider mandate that includes all types of cycling with a provincial scope.

McIntosh Run Watershed Association, which has a focus (as the name implies) on the development and governance of the McIntosh Run Watershed area.

Halifax Cycling Coalition, which was put in place to help facilitate bicycle use on city streets.

Halifax North West Trails Association, which promotes trail development, but not specific to mountain biking.

Blue Mountain Wilderness Trails Association, which focuses on hiking trail development in the Kearney Lake, Charles Lake and Ash Lake areas of the Blue Mountain Birch Cove Lakes Wilderness area.

It is important to note that this organization aims to fill an important void in the work being done by existing community groups. It is absolutely not trying to usurp any existing group.

Why we are different:

Our mandate is to secure, finance, and promote long-term mountain bike trail development in Halifax.

We want to put Halifax on the mountain biking map. If Brookvale, PEI and Miramichi, NB can do this, why can't Halifax?

Today is about adding another voice to the existing community associations.

It is about filling a void on which no other group is focused - mountain bike trail development in HRM!

This is an opportunity to build on the work of BNS, MRWA, and other community groups to continue to develop, protect, properly sign, and promote mountain bike trails in Halifax.

Where we came from:

The idea for this association came from conversations with some members of the HRM mountain bike community and a representative of city council.

It was brought to our attention that from an administrative standpoint, all forms of biking are more or less treated as the same in HRM. HRM supports recreational biking. From a policy standpoint however, there is need for differentiation between the various forms of recreational cycling (ie. bmx, rails to trails, mountain biking, etc.)

Providing mountain bike trails not only benefits health and wellness, but from an ecotourism standpoint, has the potential to have a positive economic impact on HRM. Promoting HRM as a mountain bike destination is necessary to realize this economic benefit.

How many of us have travelled to Moab, Whistler/Squamish, or Kingdom Trails to ride? With an organized and unified group advocating for mountain biking, the continued work from the dedicated trail-building volunteers of MRWA, as well as support from HRM, Halifax has the potential to be among these incredible mountain bike destinations.

What we have done to date:

- Mission Statement
- By laws

- Elected a short term, temporary Board of Directors
- Registered with Joint Registry of Stocks
- Logo Design
- Website
- Facebook Page
- Consultation with Halifax Council, which led to the development and unanimous passing of a motion to begin preliminary development of a regional mountain bike strategy.

What we hope to achieve (long term):

To create a strong member-driven association through which we can:

Have mountain biking recognized by Regional Council and Department of Recreation as a legitimate and valuable component of their healthy community strategy.

Work with HRM's planning division, BNS, MRWA, and other community groups to develop, manage and maintain mountain bike trails within HRM.

Acquire funding for trail development through Halifax's recreation budget .

Secure corporate sponsorship for trail development and signage.

Continue the incredible momentum generated by MRWA for sustainable, high quality singletrack trails.

Next Steps (short term):

Continue recruitment of members.

Arrange a meeting with the city representatives this fall to ask for a small trail development allowance to be included in the 2018 budget.

Set a date for our first AGM, at which time the signed members will elect a board of directors.

Interim Board

This board will carry the association through to the March/April 2018 AGM.

President - Mark Gentile

Vice President - Bruce Lusby

Treasurer - Stephen Pelham

Secretary - Jeff Vienneau

Director of Operations - Scott Morgan

Questions

The chair opened the floor to questions.

(notably, most questions were preceded with a comment to the effect of “thank you for taking this on”)

Q: How much would the association be asking for from HRM?

A: First we would need to identify a suitable project that is within an appropriate scope. For example this could be a small section of Fight Trail (McIntosh Run).

Q: What is the relationship with MRWA?

A: Question passed to Lawrence Plugg (MRWA) and Kaarin Tae (MRWA) who gave short description of MRWA and proceeded to describe how the board of MRWA have expressed unanimous support for the association and welcome offers for help with the McIntosh Run trail system.

Q: Is the association giving consideration to a range of skill levels for [mountain bike] trail project to take on?

A: Yes. (*Note, it is in the society objectives: “Promote sustainable Mountain Biking trails in HRM for all levels of riders from beginner to advanced.”*)

Q: Are you open to corporate sponsorship?

A: Yes.

Q: Re: BNS vs MBHA. isn't size (membership) an important consideration for funding?

A: We believe focus is very important as well. While smaller, MBHA would be in a position to devote its efforts to HRM projects.

Comment: Focused objective often get better traction in government funding requests.

A: Yes, agreed, that is the approach we are taking.

Q: Will you work with other groups?

A: Yes, we think it is important to reach out to other groups with similar interests. Like we have with MRWA.

Q: Where are you planning to build trails? Is there any usable land in HRM?

A: There are options within HRM. Provincial parks and other public land such as the in-the-works Shaw Wilderness Park.

Q: Can you share your vision for what you would like to see built?

A: We would like to focus on Fight trail for now (McIntosh Run system). The goal is to focus on manageable projects one at a time so as not to eat the elephant all in one bite, so to speak.

Q: Have you thought about being involved with other organizations like Halifax Trails Association?

A: Yes. Good idea, we will reach out to them.

Q: What else can you do for trails outside of Fight Trail (McIntosh Run)?

A: Other trail systems were considered but none come with an existing usage agreement so we would like to focus there first.

C: Consider Five Bridges Wilderness Area. Recently, bicycles have been granted access to that area.

C: (Kaarin Tae) hopefully future usage agreements will take less time than McIntosh Run has now that HRM has an existing agreement to take example from.

A: Yes with the MRWA precedent things will be easier.

Q: In your opinion is it MBHA or BNS's role to establish trail standards?

A: As uniformity across the province is important it is definitely BNS's role and they are working on it.

Q: Have you contacted bike shops?

A: So far we have had discussions with MEC and have notified others of the group's formation.

Q: How much money (order of magnitude) would you be seeking?

A: We need to identify the trail project first before proceeding.

C: Mixed commitment projects work well with government funding.

A: Yes. MRWA used a volunteer hours commitment mix with HRM funding.

C: Matching programs are how the BMX parks are done.

Q: Are you considering membership fees? You should because many here would gladly pay \$20-\$30 to support this. Especially when we cannot commit the hours.

A: We are not sure on this yet. So far we have all shelled out for this room, registration and other expenses, however. We are willingly doing this just to get this started.

Q: Is there a plan to start soliciting volunteers immediately?

A: MRWA is doing work tomorrow.

C: Also, please give us your email if you are interested at mountainbikehalifax.com

Closing.

Thanks.