

Design firm hired for Cochituate Rail Trail in Natick

By **Charlie Breitrose/Daily News staff**

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NATICK - Selectmen approved a \$29,700 contract Monday night for a firm to come up with a conceptual design for the Cochituate Rail Trail. The design process could open the doors to new sources of funding for trail construction.

Burlington-based firm Fay, Spofford & Thorndike received the contract to come up with plans for the trail, which stretches north from downtown past Rte. 9 and joins with the rail trail in Framingham. Spurs also go to Logan Express and the Natick Collection. Funding for the designs come from mitigation money provided by the developers of the Natick Collection expansion.

The contract will pay for preliminary work that could be used if and when the final project moves forward.

"It will be design work and will address access and safety issues, as well as really looking at the actual design," said Town Administrator Martha White. "It will begin to address some of the concerns or interests of the public."

The land where the trail will run still belongs to railroad company CSX Corp., said Selectman Josh Ostroff, who is on the Cochituate Rail Trail Advisory Committee.

"We're just getting into negotiations with CSX," Ostroff said. "Hopefully we'll be able to arrive at a price that works for both parties."

Ostroff said the design process will help identify potential issues with the trail construction and develop cost estimates.

"The conceptual design process will give the community further opportunity to ask questions and identify some of the concerns that may have to be taken into account," Ostroff said. "The design process will look at safety, trail (maintenance) service, privacy, and lighting."

The conceptual design should take about three months, Ostroff said.

"Conceptual design helps unlock funding from other sources - state and federal funding - for construction and potentially acquisition (of the land)," Ostroff said.

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