

Sample Letter to the Editor

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Letter: Topsfield voters see value in rail trails

To the editor:

I am very proud of my town. Earlier this month, the citizens of Topsfield turned aside an attempt to delay the proposed rail trail and further conveyed their agreement with the project by supporting a ballot question that asked if a rail trail should be built.

The voters of Topsfield tired of the creative charade of scare tactics that the opposition frantically presented to them over the past year — that trails result in increased child molestations, cyclists will ride off with their flat-panel TVs, phony budgets and cost estimates of what the town would have to pay, etc.

Halfway through the year, even the opponents realized their drama might be going a bit too far and changed their name from the Coalition for Child Safety to a more reasonable Coalition for Neighborhood Information. Name change or not, the voters of Topsfield made it known they're not easily bamboozled.

The real issue, of course, is protecting the abutters' privacy. It's a legitimate one, and the rail-trail committee should remain committed to providing published updates and holding informational forums for all during the design and construction process. This will help make it the best trail possible while maintaining, if not enhancing, the quality of life for the trail's neighbors.

I also believe a trail built for all non-motorized uses will help preserve the rural character of Topsfield. There are few things more rural than seeing horses on a trail. And as history seems fairly good at repeating itself, those who live closest to the trail will most likely use it more often and become the strongest advocates for trails, all while their property values increase solely because of their proximity to a trail.

Again, I'm proud of my neighbors and other residents who clearly realize that an abandoned railroad going through our town is a gift of substantial recreational value. And we are especially fortunate to have this resource in a society where debilitating medical conditions such as obesity and diabetes are becoming all too common. In an era where kids live increasingly sedentary lifestyles, spending more time at their computers than outside; we need more venues such as rail trails and linear parks that, when conveniently accessible and used, can help prevent these diseases and others. These public health issues are true long-term costs for all of us and ones we can and should be trying to eliminate.

DAVID READ

Topsfield