



INFORMATION UPDATE – POST DEVELOPMENT OF THE PA57 ALLIANCE

01 April 2025

The second phase of the Conway Rec Path and Petitioned Warrant Article 57 (PA57) are intertwined and have become quite a kerfuffle and it's time to speak to some realities. It is no secret that regarding the construction of Rec Path Phase II (RP2) there are two groups with vastly differing opinions and as often is the case when people disagree an unfortunate situation has developed. Friends and neighbors have become downright unfriendly and not at all neighborly. From both sides there are too many distorted or misunderstood facts being delivered. What we do know factually:

- If RP2 gets built, the world will not end because it did.
- If RP2 does not get built, the world will not end because it didn't.

Where Things Are:

The Mount Washington Valley Trails Association was significantly involved in the design and development of RP1. Everyone knows RP1 which goes from Hemlock Lane to Cranmore. RP1 was constructed entirely atop State of New Hampshire “bypass” land which may or may not have been taken over by the Town of Conway. Interestingly RP1 land is still shown on Conway's Assessing website as being owned by the State of New Hampshire. RP1 has proven successful. Many people use this path, regardless of weather or season. During the snowless times, most days there will be hundreds of people traveling this path in both directions.

The second player at the table came together somewhat recently. This group developed after the Conway Selectmen backtracked on their stated position which was to let the voters decide if RP2 should be built. This group calls themselves **The PA57 Alliance** as their Warrant Article, which speaks to “Municipal Projects and Public-Private Partnerships on Town Land”, is Article #57 on the April 8th Town of Conway Warrant. This is a dedicated group with a long history of being involved in all things Conway. They care and care deeply. Some will say their interests are only North Conway and/or Whitaker Woods but considering the group's makeup, that's factually incorrect. Their interests are many, not only associated with or directed towards Whitaker Woods.

At this time Rec Path Phase II is about sixty percent (60%) designed. “About” is used in the previous sentence as the last design plans that had been made available were presented as

such and we are not aware of a later version. These plans came from the Town of Conway on July 26th, 2024. Those plans can be viewed and/or downloaded from this [link](#). Because they came from the Town of Conway, they are indeed public domain documents.

These were the second plans that were received, the first being dated earlier – approximately March of 2024 and while the layout remains somewhat similar, there are details that are vastly different. The “first” plans can be viewed and/or downloaded [here](#) and like the others, are public documents provided by the Town of Conway after being requested. If you want an in-depth understanding of RP2 it is important to try to work your way through both plan sets. They are engineering documents, not easily interpreted by folks who don’t “read” or work with plans regularly, but a careful viewing will show most of the concern issues that have been raised where the concerns cannot be seen on the plan that is available at the [MWVTA website](#).

The plans for RP2 have been done by HEB Engineers of North Conway for the Mount Washington Valley Trails Association, (MWVTA). It is our understanding that all funds paid for design and engineering of RP2 to date have come from grants obtained by MWVTA, these funds perhaps being channeled through the Town of Conway. Reportedly no Town of Conway taxpayer funds have been used for any aspect of RP2 to date however, once constructed, the Town of Conway will, by way of methodology unknown, be expected take ownership of RP2 and will be responsible for ownership, maintenance, and liability in perpetuity. The Mount Washington Valley Trails Association will not maintain “ownership,” responsibility or liability into the future. This is one of several concern items that were raised by a subcommittee of Conway’s Planning Board and has also been expressed by the **PA57 Alliance**. The final [Planning Board Subcommittee report](#) is dated October 25, 2024. This report was delivered to the Board of Selectmen. That Board did not take any action on the report, despite the Planning Board Subcommittee identifying eleven legitimate points of concern. In fact, the Selectmen have barely acknowledged the existence of this document.

How does Petitioned Warrant Article 57 fit into this overall process? ***It has merit and should be adopted by the voters.*** If the Board of Selectmen had represented all the people of Conway this petitioned warrant article would not have happened - there would have been a Selectman authored Warrant Article speaking to RP2. However, for reasons unexplained, the Selectmen moved away from letting the voters decide. Phase II of the Rec Path project is quite different than Phase I. RP2 will run over the property of several private landowners in addition to being on both the State of New Hampshire and Town of Conway lands. The effect on immediate property owners and abutters to this path will be significant during construction and every day that the path is being used in the future. There are actual costs, money that the Town of Conway will have to raise, associated with maintenance and ownership and these costs will never go down. Additionally, it would be good if the Mount Washington Valley Trails Association would admit they are a special interest group who, admittedly, has certainly worked hard on both Rec Path projects however the burden of path ownership in perpetuity will not be theirs, they want and expect it to become the Town of Conway’s. Also important to know is that Petitioned Warrant Article 57 will not only affect this project but similar projects on Town of Conway properties in the future. Despite what

some are saying, ***the passage of Warrant Article 57 is not a death knell to RP2*** but instead, it provides an opportunity for all (voting) Conway's citizens to have a say in what happens on lands that they own. These lands belong to the people of Conway... all the people of Conway... not just a select few. Is Warrant Article 57 written perfectly? Gosh no – it has flaws. When adopted can it be improved in the future? Of course it can! It will be a part of Conway Code with all/any part being amendable as time moves forward. If any government entity waited for each regulation to be perfect before adoption, there would be no regulations.

Where To Go from Here:

The following could be an effective way to regroup and allow everyone the opportunity to be part of the process.

- ***Petitioned Warrant Article 57 should be adopted by the Voters on April 8th.***
- The Board of Selectmen should then appoint a sub-committee consisting of one member from their board (who is not already the board's planning board representative), one member from the Conservation Commission, two members from the planning board and one resident of Conway. This subcommittee will first be responsible to work with MWVTA and their engineers to have the plans completed for RP2. These plans shall properly addresses all concerns that have been raised to date and others that will be identified as the process continues.
- All necessary easements and construction permits shall be obtained.
- This sub-committee will be responsible for working with MWVTA to develop a thorough program of pertinent facts that can be presented to the townspeople at a public forum, not at a Selectmen's meeting. This process would be similar to what the Planning Board did leading up to and through the Master Plan process. There should be presentations at a couple of different venues on different dates.
- If all goes successfully, a Warrant Article can be placed on an upcoming Warrant to allow the voters to consider if they want to allow the construction of RP2 on town lands and also to accept the ownership of RP2 after it is constructed by others, constructed without any funds from the Town of Conway.

Many people that are associated with RP2 have stated that this process began over a decade ago and can't wait any longer. That's silly. Often when planning a project a few backward steps have to be taken to get things right. There's absolutely no harm in pumping the brakes and getting this accepted by all the stakeholders, those being all the taxpayers of Conway.