



Friends of Schell Bridge

Northfield, Massachusetts

a nonprofit
501c3 corporation

incorporated
2004 Aug 20

Friends of Schell Bridge seeks to save the century-old, architecturally-rare, and historically-significant Schell Memorial Bridge across the beautiful Connecticut River in the storied town of Northfield, Massachusetts, and to restore the bridge as a critical trail link in the evolving biking, hiking, and recreational activity scene in the Massachusetts/Vermont/New Hampshire tri-state area.

Newsletter - Fall 2006 www.schellbridge.org

Petition results - everyone says YES

Well, maybe not everyone, but close; spectacular results from the signature petition.

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Strategic plan - draft underway

Everything you always wanted to know about the future of the Schell - what, how, when, ... well, maybe not quite all of the details just yet.

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Arts Fest display the talk of the town



Friends of Schell Bridge a big hit at the show.
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Restoration costs - an update on guesses

The numbers are all over the map, so maybe yours are as good as anyone's. Check out the latest guesstimates.

Page 2, and below

iGive to the bridge

Ever shop online? If so, why not help save the bridge at the same time, at no cost to you? Check out how that magic is done.

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Membership - time to renew

That time of year again. And remember the more you give the more you save - on your taxes.

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On a Roll

MASS HIGHWAYS HEARS CHEERS FOR THE SCHELL.

The efforts to save the Schell have advanced considerably over the past few months. Friends of Schell Bridge wants to maintain that momentum.

A good crowd attended the recent informational meeting held by the Northfield Selectboard on September 20th to hear a report on the Schell Bridge by the Mass Highway Department. Here's a recap of that meeting:

Blue and white "Save the Schell!" flags lining the sidewalk snapped in the breeze as townsfolk, bridge buffs, bikeway enthusiasts, engineers, and transportation officials converged on the Pioneer Valley Regional School. Postcards announcing the meeting had been sent to every petition signer within driving distance and at least 250 showed up.

Inside, the Friends of the Schell Bridge were ready in the lobby with displays, maps, photos, and a huge scrolled petition with 1468 signatures. Many people arriving spoke to the greeters about being glad to have an opportunity to tell the town that they did not want the Schell Bridge to suffer the same fate as Northfield's other historic treasures such as the Chateau and the Inn.

The meeting was called to order by the Northfield Selectboard who introduced the Mass Highway Department representatives



and their consulting engineers. Richard Masse, engineer from the highway department, in his opening remarks agreed that the bridge is eligible to be listed on the National Historic Register and that the demolition of the bridge would cost \$1.3 million; rehabilitation costs were estimated to be \$15 to 25 million, numbers that, unlike the demolition costs, were not based on an engineering design; a subsequent breakdown of that estimated cost-range totaled \$15.6 million.

The Mass Highway engineers spoke for about 15 minutes and asked for questions from the audience. After the first few timid souls spoke up, breaking the ice, the meeting really got rolling.

For the next hour, one bridge supporter after another came to the microphone to speak passionately and eloquently for saving Schell Bridge—often followed by extended applause from a like-minded audience. There were a few comments from the engineers and the selectboard, but the meeting belonged to the audience. Thoughts came from those who had memories of the bridge as children, West Northfielders who felt cut off from the rest of Northfield when the bridge closed, cyclists who wanted to connect the bridge to the Franklin County Bikeway, bridge-savers from other towns who encouraged us to keep up the fight, and of course the Friends of Schell Bridge chair, Marie Ferre, who asked the town selectboard to come together with us to figure out how to save the bridge. If there were Northfield citizens present who want the bridge demolished, they chose not to speak.

The energy of the meeting was strikingly positive, the tone very civilized. Talking with the engineers after the meeting, we had the feeling that they, who had brought bad tidings during the first fifteen minutes, were, by the end, actually rooting for the townspeople to find the money to save the bridge.

One of the next steps for Friends of Schell Bridge is to commission a comprehensive engineering design to determine the true cost of rehabilitation of the Schell, which we expect to be something less than \$10 million.

Petition Results



- many benefits to the town
 - vital regional trail system link
 - basically sound → restorable
 - beautiful historic old bridge
 - part of Northfield's heritage
- We, the undersigned, want to see the Schell Bridge saved.

Name Address

1468 Signed this petition

720 Northfield Residents

567 Addn'l within 30 miles

181 Addn'l over 30 miles

(as of Oct 2, 2006)

Signatures were gathered at town events and various public locations, and through a town wide canvass. For the canvass, the town was divided into five sections: Northfield Center, East Northfield, Northfield Farms, Northfield Hills, and West Northfield. Each section was further divided into neighborhoods, with each neighborhood comprising approximately forty-five households. Teams canvassed door-to-door in the 26 neighborhoods describing possible economic, recreational, and historical advantages for Northfield if the Schell Bridge can be saved and restored rather than demolished. Informational materials were distributed clearly stating that expenses for restoration and maintenance of the bridge would not come from town taxes. Support for saving Schell Bridge was enthusiastic throughout all 26 neighborhoods.

Over 700 signatures in a town the size of Northfield is an astoundingly high number, indicating extremely strong community support in the town for looking seriously into the prospects for saving Schell Bridge before the state wrecking crews descend.



Strategic Plan

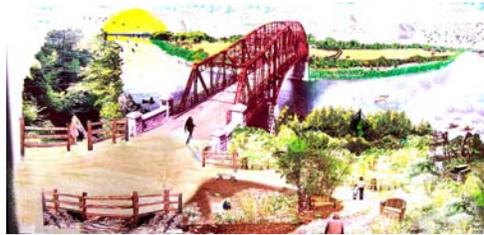
A detailed strategic plan is being developed for Friends of Schell Bridge. As currently envisioned, it will include a vision statement, a mission statement, five general goals, and fifty or more specific objectives and actions.

Hopefully the strategic plan will effectively communicate the purpose and plans of Friends of Schell Bridge, particularly in regard to major fund raising. When the plan is in a suitably lucid state it will be distributed to all members for further input.



Arts Fest Success

The Schell Bridge booth at the Arts Festival on August 19th was the centerpiece of the fair. The large lot at the Green Trees Gallery was full of artists, craft people, and food vendors; Friends of Schell Bridge was fortunate to have a double-sized space, front and center. Numerous people contributed time and talent to this success, which featured a number of eye-catching displays.



The displays included this painting/collage, which challenged viewers to imagine the benefits of a rehabilitated Schell Bridge, a draped 74 foot long scroll of the signed petitions, a set of vignette remembrances of the bridge when it was open, and more. These items attracted a steady stream of admirers who signed more petitions, made donations, and engaged in interested conversation.



Rehab Costs

As mentioned on page 1, Mass Highways has provided an estimate for rehabilitation of the Schell totaling \$15.6 million - \$8.0M for steel work, \$3.5M for painting, \$2.0M for decking, \$0.9M for the piers, \$0.2M for approach upgrades, and \$1.0M other. Engineers and contractors in the audience questioned that figure, pointing out that a comprehensive engineering design would put the true cost at about half that figure.

Therefore, one of the next jobs for Friends of Schell Bridge is to raise the \$40-50 thousand needed to conduct such a design. If you would like to help in this effort, check the "I would like to volunteer ..." box on the enclosed membership form.



iGive.com

iGive.com allows you to shop online, at almost 700 stores, and the vendor donates a portion of your purchase cost to Friends of Schell Bridge. (It doesn't cost you any more -

as the system passes you through directly to the online store of your choice - and the donation, typically 2% or more, is made automatically. For example, if you buy inkjet cartridges for your printer, try Proinkets.com (via iGive) and you'll get great prices and a 10.4% donation to Friends of Schell Bridge. At Value Mags (all kinds of magazine subscriptions) it's 26%; Brookstone, 5.6%, Vista print 6.8%, Toys R us (or (Babies R us), 2.8%. Buy your coffee online at Starbucks and benefit Friends of Schell Bridge with 4% (or Gevalia's even better: 4.8%). Staples is 2.8%, Lands' End, 2.8%, Montgomery Ward 6%, EMS, 3.2%, and lots, lots more.

Here's how you make this happen: simply browse to www.iGive.com/SchellBridge, signup (if you're a first-time visitor - instructions should be easy to follow), then simply visit the mall, make your purchases, and help save the bridge.



Time to Renew

Enclosed is an addressed, stamped envelope to renew your membership in Friends of Schell Bridge for 2007. Yes, it is true that, in the announcement of last June's annual meeting, you were told that the annual membership period was from annual meeting to annual meeting (June to June), but things change and the new decision is calendar year (January to January). So renew now, save big on your taxes, and help save the bridge.

And while you're at it, look at those two check boxes at the bottom of the membership form. Checking the first of those two will get you communications like this via email rather than snail mail. Checking the second one ("I would like to volunteer ...") will get you a call from someone - good things will happen from that point on.



Note the enclosed copy of a recent letter from The National Trust to the selectboard (reproduced here with permission). This letter lays out the case for saving Schell Bridge very well indeed. If you agree with this letter, consider letting the selectboard know that you support its message, and that you hope they will take its recommendations seriously.

What sort of newsletter items would you like to see? How about a "Members Speak Out" column? Write to info@schellbridge.org with your comments, suggestions, contributions.