



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 - Spring 2007 www.schellbridge.org

National Historic Register awaiting

Dramatic town vote to nominate the bridge.

Page 2

2007 annual meeting around the corner

June 23 - you won't want to miss this one.

Page 2

Strategic plan now available

First edition published. Get your copy now.

Page 2

Summer plans

Canoe regatta, arts fest booth, more ...

Page 2

Bridge cleanup a bust (sorta, then again ...)

The east road is looking the best in a long time.

Page 2

Culvert mystery

Anybody know the when and why of this culvert?

Page 2

Getting Real

VHB TO DO CHARRETTE* ON REHAB, TRAILS, ETC.

The nationally known engineering firm of Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc., will come to Northfield in June.

Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. [VHB], a nationally recognized, full service engineering firm, has agreed to come to Northfield for two days in June [22 and 23] to lead a public participation charette sponsored by Friends of Schell Bridge, Inc. that will answer two basic questions:

1. Develop routes for connecting the Schell Memorial Bridge into a regional bikeway network.
2. Compile the bridge studies and reports previously completed on behalf of the Friends and provide updated renovation cost information.

They will bring to Northfield, a multi-disciplined team of engineers and planners to show how the burgeoning network of trails and greenways in both southwest New Hampshire and southeastern VT can connect into the Franklin County Bikeway network by using the Schell Bridge as a key component of that route. VHB regularly does these high-impact charettes to help jump-start regionally significant bicycle/pedestrian projects. One of their most recent forays with this pro-bono charette was in Manchester,

In business for over 25 years, VHB brings an unmatched, full service approach to helping municipal and state governments meet the demands of actively maintaining transportation systems and infrastructure. VHB has a proven track record of success with a full range of transportation projects, including road design, bikeways, and bridges.

VHB recently developed, over a three-year period, the national award winning, *Project Development and Design Guidebook* for the Massachusetts Highway Department.

Bill DeSantis, P.E., Corporate Director Bike/Ped Transportation, said "The Schell Memorial Bridge looks to be a key component of what could be a world class bike-route that would be useful for low-impact interstate tourism, economic development, and general enhanced quality of life for the residents of the area." "Our charettes have a track record of providing a tipping point that moves ideas forward based on facts and public participation." "We are looking forward to coming to Northfield."

N H where a b i k e - w a y i s n o w b e i n g d e v e l o p e d f r o m S a l e m t o C o n c o r d .



*From <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charrette>:

A **charrette** (pronounced [shuh-ret]), ... an intense period of [design](#) activity.

Historic Register

In a dramatic finish to the 2007 Northfield Town Meeting, the town voted overwhelmingly to direct the select board to write a letter to the Mass Historical Commission requesting the application to nominate the bridge for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The vote was 70% for sending the letter, 30% against.

The debate was spirited but civil. Speaking against were those who feared that Mass Highways might take the bridge off its demolition list if the bridge became listed on the national register, potentially leaving the town with a huge clean-up bill should the bridge fall. Others lamented the loss of Northfield history and sketched a rehabilitated bridge and associated trails as an exciting vision for a renewed town. A couple of speakers characterized the debate as hope against fear; on this night hope prevailed resoundingly.



Annual Meeting

The 2007 annual meeting of Friends of Schell Bridge will take place Saturday afternoon, June 23, at 4:00, in the basement of First Parish Church, Northfield. Following a (very) short business meeting, VHB will conduct its public charrette on the costs of bridge rehabilitation and the design of a trail network that would use a reopened bridge - see the first page of this newsletter.

You won't want to miss this charrette!



Strategic Plan

The meeting room in the Trinitarian Church was almost full on the evening of March 25 for the public review of the draft of the Friends of Schell Bridge strategic plan. The comments and suggestions made during that

meeting have been incorporated into the document and, at this writing, the final copy is being prepared for printing.

The strategic plan will be used as the main tool - the face of the Friends of Schell Bridge, as it were - in various fundraising activities. To this end a number of photos of the bridge, trail maps, etc., will be incorporated, the layout will be professionally designed, and the printing will be high quality.

Copies will first be available at the annual meeting - come get one of the first copies.



Summer Plans

Among the summer plans are to have some sort of function in connection with the FISA International Rowing Tour to take place on the river July 22-25 between Vernon VT and Barton Cove.



Also, Friends of Schell Bridge will have a booth at the Northfield Arts Festival again this year. (Remember what a smashing success the FSB booth was last year?)



Bridge Cleanup

The road to the April 28 cleanup was rocky, but the road cleaned up reasonably well.

The outing was intended to clean the trash and brush from the access road leading to the east end of the bridge, and especially to remove the tree that had fallen across the road, completely blocking it.



April 28 turned out to be a beautiful day and about 10 people showed up. However, earlier in April the Northfield Select Board had sent a letter requiring a million dollars of insurance and a written agreement to release the town of all liability; on April 27 those requirements were reiterated in a followup phone call.

So what to do? In agreement with all present, the cleanup was cancelled as a Friends of Schell Bridge project, and a sign posted to that effect. But everyone wanted to stay and work anyway (and all had a good time). Two hours later the tree no longer blocked the road (see photo) and the approach beyond the big curve was passable and looked better than it has in a long time.

Perhaps things can be worked out with the select board re future cleanups. Stay tuned!



Culvert Mystery

This concrete culvert is just a few feet from the big bend in the road to the bridge, probably on NMH property. But the NMH historian knows nothing about it. One theory is that it was built in 1903, when the bridge was built, to route field run-off away from the bridge. Anybody know the real story?



Friends of Schell Bridge Membership Form	
<i>memberships and donations are tax-deductible</i>	
Name _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Schell Saver \$100
Address _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Bridge Booster \$50
City, State _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Family \$25
Zip _____ Phone _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Individual \$15
Email _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Student \$5
<input type="checkbox"/> I prefer to receive news and alerts via email.	<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____
<input type="checkbox"/> I would like to volunteer to help save Schell Bridge.	

Mail to: Friends of Schell Bridge, P.O. Box 27, Northfield, MA 01360