

June 7, 2016 Post Star article by Post Star staff writer Maury Thompson

Halfway Brook Plans are back on

Queensbury Supervisor John Strough said the same question comes up over and over. "Everywhere I go, people ask me, 'Halfway Brook Trail? Halfway Brook Trail?'" he said, referring to a proposal to open a section of Glens Falls watershed property in Queensbury for public recreation.

Discussion of the intermunicipal project broke down in February when Queensbury officials objected to provisions in a licensing agreement the city proposed, and Glens Falls Mayor Jack Diamond said the city was not willing to negotiate changes.

Discussion is back on, and Diamond has submitted a revised proposal for Queensbury officials to consider. Strough negotiated the revised proposal line-by-line directly with members of the city Water and Sewer Board, Diamond said. "Some early comments (from Town Board members) look at it very favorably. ... I think we're on a good path to getting this approved," Strough said.

The licensing agreement would allow the town to develop a public recreational trail between Aviation and Peggy Ann roads on city-owned watershed property. The project would include construction of a pedestrian bridge over Halfway Brook.

State Sen. Elizabeth Little, R-Queensbury, arranged a \$100,000 state grant for trail development, and the town would pick up any additional costs.

One of town officials' objections to the original proposal was that the town would be required to pay half of the city's property taxes on the trail property, which would have cost the town \$14,178 annually for the preferred route, or \$5,510 annually for an alternative route with a much steeper incline. The revised proposal would exempt the city from paying "any town property tax" on the lower watershed property. As he understands the agreement, the city would still pay full school and county property taxes, Strough said. "We don't have a high town tax anyway. ... I don't see that as being a problem,"

Town officials also had objected to the town's liability applying to the entire lower watershed, not just to the land around the trail. The revised agreement makes the town liable for injuries or property damage "arising from use of the improvements by the town."

Town officials had objected to the makeup of a land management committee, originally proposed to have four members from the city and three from the town. The revised agreement calls for three members from the city and three from the town, with each member having an equal vote.

Strough will be discussing the proposed agreement with Town Board members in the coming days.

"There's still some wrinkles we've got to iron out here and get verified... we're pretty close," he said. "We have an agreement that I think works for both communities. And I think in two years we'll see a trail there."