

Groton Trails Committee



Meeting Minutes for July 15, 2003– Draft

Location: Downstairs in Legion Hall

Members in attendance: Paul Funch, Don Torgersen, Steve Legge, Vic Burton, Wendy Good, Bruce Clements, and Ed McNierney were present (Bruce Easom joined the meeting later).

Members absent: Brad Paul

DRAFT

Guests: Hélène Cahen

Burton moved to accept the minutes of the June 17, 2003 meeting as corrected. Torgersen seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Funch raised the election of officers for the 2003-2004 year. There was discussion about the benefits of rotating officers and the value of maintaining the current officers. Legge spoke of the contribution Funch has made to the committee as chairman through his energy, organizational skills, and communications skills.

Easom joined the meeting. Helene Cahen (non-member) joined the meeting.

Funch is willing to serve as Chairman for another year, although he would appreciate some assistance in some of the duties of the office. Clements nominated Funch as Chairman. There were no other nominations. Funch called for a vote, and Funch was elected unanimously.

Legge inquired about the responsibilities of the Vice Chairman. Good reported that the Vice Chairman is responsible for handling the Chairman's responsibilities when he or she is unable to do so. Clements moved to nominate Legge as Vice Chairman. Easom seconded the motion. There were no other nominations. Funch called for a vote, and Legge was elected unanimously.

Easom nominated McNierney as Secretary. Good seconded the motion. There were no other nominations. Funch called for a vote, and McNierney was elected unanimously.

Burton reported on being contacted by the Cub Scout Pack #11 scoutmaster, Paul Ciarfella, and he is organizing this group (grades 1 -5) to work on the new Groton Woods trail, moving cut brush off the trail, picking up survey tapes, and doing general cleanup. The cleanup will be held on Saturday, July 26 from 9 AM to noon. There was general commendation for everyone involved in the effort - it was a considerable project and a great effort.

Several committee members (Clements, Easom, Funch, Legge) reported on the Squannacook River Rail Trail meeting in Townsend that was initiated by Al Futterman and Bob Hickox, who are spearheading the project. The goal of the meeting was to get the Townsend Board of Selectmen to request a draft lease from the MBTA for consideration. The Selectmen were opposed or non-supportive at this time and expressed concern about impacts on abutters and others in Town. One of the Selectmen seemed somewhat supportive but unwilling to take a strong position. Funch felt that the Selectmen seemed to feel that if ANY abutter was opposed to it they should not proceed. The Chairman (whose mother is an abutter) was quite adamantly opposed. Funch suggested the Trails Committee send a letter to Groton Selectman Peter Cunningham thanking him for his support. Legge was not sure he was comfortable about doing that. Easom will draft the letter and bring it to the next meeting for review. Easom has been researching the deeds to the abutting/encroaching properties and believes that no abutter has a valid claim to any MBTA property. Futterman and Hickox plan to return to the Townsend Board of Selectmen in September or October.

Burton reported that the Longley II/Cronin/Shepley/Rich Tree Farm State Forest/Northwoods map is progressing but not yet ready to discuss.

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Funch reviewed the draft letter to the Conservation Commission concerning the Paquawket Path trail easement. Good expressed concern with the wording since the easement specifically grants access to Town of Groton Conservation Commission property. Good has a letter on this issue written 15 years ago by Town Counsel Peter Cole, and she will provide a copy of that letter and a copy of the easement document to the Trails Committee. McNierney will make suggested edits to the letter and email it to Funch.

Good reported that Highway Surveyor Tom Delaney recommended that the trailhead posts at the Northwoods roadsides should be installed about 8 feet from the pavement. This will allow room for plowing and should be comfortably within the 10-foot-wide strip of land owned by the Town beyond the pavement. Easom collected GPS data on June 12 along the trail easement, and McNierney will provide maps for field work to follow. Burton got input on the Northwoods portion of his trail mapping work.

DigSafe approval is needed for trailhead posts at Kailey's Way, Little Hollow Road, Hidden Valley Road, and Longley Road (at Northwoods). Burton also cleared the trail access at the corner of Hidden Valley and Duck Pond Roads where the playground set used to be.

The trailhead post at the Hurd Land needs to be replaced (it was removed by a car accident, but is still in good shape) and Leon Hurd asked that it be placed a bit further from the other post to allow his mowing equipment to get between them.

McNierney asked about the NEFF Gleason Connector trailhead post plans, since it's the first time we're installing our posts on private property. Good will speak to Sue Yeager about getting a letter granting us permission.

Good has worked with Sue Yeager to flag the actual location of the Gleason Connector. Good is working on actual trail development from Pepperell Road through the Gleason Connector. There have been some issues with the neighbors in this location.

Clements suggested that trailhead posts be installed at the Pacer Way subdivision to provide access to the Rail Trail. McNierney will take a look at the area.

Legge raised the issue of dumping of grass clippings, leaves, and other yard waste on trails abutting private residential properties. Burton spoke to Barbara Ganem about this issue today; Kathleen O'Connor looked into the issue for the Conservation Commission. Barbara Ganem is under the impression that the Trails Committee was going to do something about this issue. Good recalled that the Conservation Commission was going to take care of it. It was noted that this is not a trails-specific issue, but rather an aspect of how the Conservation Commission wants to manage its properties (since it is reasonable to expect that much of this dumping happens on portions of Conservation Commission properties where there are no trails). Funch pointed out that the Conservation Commission should adopt management plans and goals for each of its properties. Clements reminded the group that there may be a vacancy on the Conservation Commission in the near future.

Good suggested that we raise the above issue with the Conservation Commission the next time we meet, and come to a resolution with them. In addition, we should review the continuation of maintenance on Conservation Commission trails where the Conservation Commission had previously granted us permission for that maintenance.

McNierney will contact Steve Webber to check on the status of plans for trail development on Gibbet Hill.

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Good reminded the group that the Groton Conservation Trust's Brooks Orchard project is before the Planning Board again on Thursday, July 24.

Legge suggested we periodically place articles in the local newspapers announcing new trails-related events; Burton's new Groton Woods/Flavell Crossing trail development would be a great candidate. Legge and Burton will work on this initial project, and on a September target for a subsequent article on the Skyfields (Wiewel) trail. Legge will begin developing a list of where we have installed trailhead posts, to be circulated to the group for editing.

Clements asked about the status of the trail easements in Partridgeberry Woods, which haven't been discussed lately. He has been looking at the area for potential development and trailhead marking. Funch will check with Brad Paul and/or the Board of Selectmen for the easement language.

Easom moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:50 PM. The motion passed unanimously.