



TOWN OF GROTON

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Groton Trails Committee

**** Monthly Meeting Minutes ****
20 September 2005
Town Hall

Attendees:

Joachim Preiss
Paul Funch
Stephen Legge
~~Bruce Eason~~
Wendy Good
~~Ed McNierney~~
Vic Burton
Vacant
Vacant

Visitors:

Tom Callahan
Bob Lotz

1. Meeting called to order with quorum at 7:37 p.m.
2. There were two applications for the open position on our Committee, but the first, from Ed Bretschneider, was submitted after Chris Shaffer was nominated to the Committee and so Ed was told that the position was filled. Subsequently, the second opening became available and Chris Christie applied, but Ed was not aware of the opening. Desiring to fill the position as soon as possible before the next meeting, and wanting to be fair to Ed, it was moved: To nominate Ed Bretschneider to fill the open Groton Trails Committee position, pending his willingness to resubmit his application. The vote was unanimous in favor of the motion.
Moved: In the event that Ed no longer wishes to be a member, then we nominate Chris Christie to the open position on the Groton Trails Committee. The vote was unanimous in favor of the motion.
3. Report on Grotonfest: Joachim felt it was a great success. There was much interest in Fitch's Bridge restoration, the Rail Trail, and the Town Forest Races. In addition, four people signed up to be on the Trail Project e-mail list. Steve Legge said an Amy Blake from Pepperell was looking for the Trail Committee in Pepperell. Paul said he would get her the contact information for the Nashoba Conservation Trust. An Acorn Path resident also indicated interest in opening a trail from there to the Groton Woods Conservation Land. The sliver of land on which the trail can be put needs to be carefully surveyed since it is so narrow. Evan Owen of the Conservation Commission has done some work on this parcel and Steve will pursue this project. Joachim noted that the signs need sprucing up for next year and the idea of purchasing a banner for the Trails Committee was briefly discussed, but with no conclusion.
4. Gibbet Hill trail update: Ed McNierney was unable to attend this meeting, but he sent a lengthy e-mail to get the Committee up-to-date. Joachim read the e-mail since there were no copies to be found. A summary of that e-mail follows:
 - Ed met with Steve Webber at Gibbet Hill after the last Trails Committee meeting, and they thoroughly reviewed the status of the trail over Gibbet Hill from Route 40 to Shattuck Street.
 - Steve has had the area going up the hill from Route 40 mowed and he is also willing to help on other aspects of the trail work as his schedule and back permit.
 - At Route 40, the designated "parking area" is wetland and unusable for parking.
 - Steve has reported that DCR rejected his request to trade additional parking near the restaurant (on restricted land) for an extended trail easement.
 - The path to the top of the hill is quite obvious and needs little signage.

- From the top of the hill, the path heads north and out through an electrified gate. Installing a post or two would help as there are no trees in this area to indicate this path.
- The trail easement does NOT go through this gate however. The easement leaves the corner of the hilltop park to the east of the gate, closer to the cell tower. Steve would like to have the trail remain where it is (through the gate), and Ed agrees that this is easier for everyone. Like the wide fencing at the bottom of the hill, we should simply note that this is not the easement area and a future owner might want us to relocate the trail. The official easement is fine for a trail, although we would need to create a long pathway (through the "park") where there is none today at the top of the hill.
- From here the trail will also need a marker or two, but there are a few trees for that purpose. It proceeds through the open across the wetland area in the saddle between the two summits to a rather rustic gate.
- This wetland is a problematic crossing that will need Conservation Commission assistance. There are stones in the wetland from historical efforts to create a pathway for the Black Angus across it. As a result, the stones cover an area about 30 feet wide and maybe 8 inches deep; if we could convert that to stones 10 feet wide and 2 feet deep we'd have a great crossing. At the moment there's no trouble crossing it, but Steve said he's never seen it so dry before. A bridge of some sort would be impossibly long (maybe 100 feet), and the only other alternative would be puncheons [Note: "plank or board made by hewing instead of sawing"], which are fine for foot traffic but not for horses. And those would be new "structures" in the wetland [Note: but not if the supports for them simply lay on top of the ground and are not anchored into the ground]. We need to consult with the Conservation Commission on whether the shuffling of existing stones can be considered "maintenance" of an existing structure, since the stones are clearly a man-made crossing.
- Steve noted that he will replace the rustic gate with a new one. The trail needs to be cleared and marked in this area.
- Once through the gate, you're at the driveway to the cell tower, and the trail easement proceeds down the driveway (south) to the road that runs to the reservoir and fire tower. At this point the easement crosses that road and turns east along the northern edge of the Olson property.
- It does NOT run on the road, but about 20 feet south of it and parallel to it. This is open but needs some brushing out and more posts to indicate direction. The easement proceeds east to the southeastern corner of the fence around the fire tower.
- From there the trail heads southeast across the top of the open slope above the house now owned by Jane Allen and her husband. This has been mowed but will need a little cleanup and posts at either end to indicate where the trail goes. It enters the open woods and begins a series of three switchbacks descending to Shattuck Street.
- Steve and I did not attempt to replicate the 10-foot-wide easement corridor with survey accuracy, so this is another spot where the implementation of the trail might not exactly match the easement. We did flag the corner points for the switchbacks. The trail here needs a treadway and a little reinforcement of direction at the corners.
- The fencing along Shattuck Street no longer serves any purpose, and Steve has given us permission to remove any part of it. Trail access can be obtained by removing one section of about 30 feet between posts (it's just wire mesh fencing that can be cut and rolled up).
- All the work from the wetland crossing east and south to Shattuck Street, and the rest of the signage (except for the main property sign at the bottom) can be done by the Trails Committee whenever convenient.
- Ed will contact the Conservation Commission to discuss the wetland/stones crossing.
- Ed said he would like to do the Gibbet Hill trail development work in October. The Trail Projects currently scheduled in October are on the 8th and the 29th, plus of course the Town

Forest Trail Races on the 23rd. If the Town Forest does not need any maintenance prior to the trail races, then the project on the 8th could be assigned to Gibbet Hill. However, the decision on the date(s) to work on Gibbet Hill was to be left to Ed since he was the one who offered to organize it.

5. Scarlet Hill trail update: Meredith Scarlet has marked the trail up to the top of the hill with markers we provided. The trail across the stream to Groton Conservation Trust's "Angus Acre" and thence to Orchard Lane is effectively blocked by poison ivy that no one seems to want to penetrate at this time. Consensus developed that this was a good spring project.
6. Town Forest Race update: Applications are coming in, which is earlier than usual. Very fine sponsorship was lost this year after Kraft buy-out, but was regained for Fruit20. Main St. Café changed ownership a couple of weeks ago, but they had already agreed to continue the sponsorship before they were even approached by Paul! Paul had a meeting with Bayard Underwood to work out an agreement for the use of the Shakerton Foundation land (formerly the Squannacook Sportsmen's Club). In exchange for allowing runners to walk across the property, thereby making parking easier/safer on the Senior Center driveway, Paul was asked to make a \$50 contribution to the Foundation. The Committee concurred that this was reasonable and approved of the agreement. [Note: The Shakerton Foundation was founded by Bayard in 1963 as a non-profit corporation whose purposes are to promote Shaker studies, to record Shaker architecture and planning, and to educate the public in Shaker culture by means of publications, lectures, exhibits, etc.]
7. Report on Discussion with Conservation Commission: Paul met with the Conservation Commission on 23 August and the following discussions and decisions occurred:
 - Approval (unanimous) was obtained for installing trail-head posts at the Saddle Lane cul-de-sac and for completing the trail around the southern and western edges of the Longley II subdivision.
 - Trails Committee was asked to submit an RDA for the footbridge across the stream that feeds the pond at Northwoods. Paul suggested the use of weathered (12+ years) pressure-treated wood, but the Conservation Commission would like to be provided with evidence of how much weathering diminishes the leaching of arsenic, etc., from the wood. Their clear preference was for non-treated wood.
 - The Conservation Commission was enthusiastic about the idea of developing handicapped accessible trails either at the Northwoods Pond trail or at Groton Conservation Trust's Gamlin Picnic Area off Fitch's Bridge Rd. A packed stone dust trail would very likely be acceptable. They also encouraged applying for Community Preservation Act funds to pay for the trails. Paul offered to check with Highway Surveyor Tom Delaney to see what help he could provide in either the design or the construction.
 - Paul requested that the Conservation Commission continue with their purchase and installation of 10 signs per year. The problem with getting them this year was apparently with the sign maker, but Paul's request prodded them to approve them at their next meeting. They approved signs for Northwoods (2); Groton Woods (4); replacing the Cronin sign on the Rail Trail; Sawtell (2), and Batten Woods.
 - Paul reported encroachments were continuing at the Sawtell cul-de-sac, at 77 Hidden Valley Rd., and on Kailey's Way. Paul also reported notable cooperation in correcting encroachments at several other locations such as 62 Duck Pond Rd., 82 Hidden Valley Rd., and 62 Deerfield Rd. In response to the encroachments that have continued, the Conservation Commission has begun a dialog with the Selectmen to establish a fine structure for such chronic encroachment violations.
8. Meeting adjourned at 9:20 p.m.