



# TOWN OF GROTON

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Groton Trails Committee

## Monthly Meeting Minutes 21 January 2014

### Attendees:

Chairman	Paul Funch	X
Members:	David Burnham	X
	Wendy Good	-
	Olin Lathrop	X
	Stephen Legge	X
	David Minott	X (Recorder)
	Jim Molaskey	X
	David Pitkin	x
	Scott Stathis	-
	John Wiesner	X
	Joachim Preiss	-

### Visitors:

Bruce Easom

### Call to Order

At 7:40 p.m. Chairman Paul Funch called the meeting to order with the above quorum of Committee members present, as well as one guest attendee.

### Approval of Minutes

Olin L. moved to accept the minutes of 17 December 2013; Dave P. seconded; approved by unanimous vote.

### Reports/Old Business

Guided hikes reported on by Olin L.:

- Hike held 12 January 2014 through J Harry Rich State Forest, led by Olin, had a record 47 hikers, many joining as a result of AMC co-sponsorship of the hike.
- Upcoming GTC/AMC joint sponsored hikes (Olin L., Leader)
  - 1) Groton Place to Surrenden Farm - Sunday, Feb. 9<sup>th</sup>, 1PM
  - 2) Williams Barn/ Sorhaug Woods – Sunday, Mar. 16<sup>th</sup>, 1PM
  - 3) The Throne – Sunday, Apr. 13<sup>th</sup>, 1PM

NEFF's Wharton Plantation Bridge Project: Olin L. reported that NEFF is fine with the proposed bridge and that the Conservation Commission has confirmed that a Request for Determination of Applicability (RDA) must be filed and processed prior to any installation work on the bridge.

NE Power property near Route 119 and Sandy Pond Road: Olin L. spoke with a public information representative of the parent company, National Grid. The representative seemed most concerned over the liability issues associated with hikers near power facilities, deeming current hikers on the

land to be “trespassers.” However, the representative requested an emailed proposal to convey to “the right people” within National Grid for formal consideration. Olin supplied the requested proposal, including a map with the proposed trail routing and entry point.

Brown Lane (Watson Way CA) to Corwin easement (to Cox-Walker) trail: Paul F., Bruce E., Steve L., and Dave B. led a discussion of the plan for a new trail to connect Watson with the Corwin property. A Conservation Commission site walk on the proposed trail route is scheduled for Saturday, January 25th. Wendy G. and Bruce E. have flagged the proposed trail and mapped its location via GPS readings. Regarding the Watson property, Paul recommended keeping the trail closer to the water to avoid steep climbs, noting a maximum 5% grade criterion for accessibility and sustainability. Committee members discussed the sometimes competing goals of designing a trail to be interesting and physically feasible, while trying to keep it accessible. From Committee discussion, there was strong agreement on the value of accessible trails and the need for more to be built around the town.. For the Watson/Cox-Walker project, Paul and Steve volunteered to return to the Watson section and attempt to flag both a gentle-terrain low-route trail for accessibility and a high-route trail for interest, ahead of the site walk by the Conservation Commission. Bruce E., as a Conservation Commissioner, advised that the GTC should flag the specific trail route(s) they want the Commission to sign off on.

Meeting with the Stewardship Committee of the Groton Conservation Trust: Paul F. reported that he, Dave M. and Olin L. met 30 December 2013 with Ted Lapres and Mark Gerath of the Trust’s Stewardship Committee to discuss trails issues of mutual interest. Paul reported that, while the Trust representatives expressed appreciation for GTC’s collaboration on trail maintenance, the Trust’s main concern with GTC members and other volunteers working on Trust properties is liability, given the high cost of liability insurance. Paul F. volunteered to check with the Town Counsel, through the Town Manager, regarding the extent of liability to a private landowner resulting from town committee members and volunteers working on that private land.

MARTAB Chain Saw Training Course: Paul F. reported that the first 2-day training course is coming up (Dave B. said he received notice that it was on 15-16 March 2014), sponsored by the Massachusetts Recreational Trails Advisory Board (MARTAB). He advised that interested committee members should register at once, as available slots are limited. Paul proposed making attendance at such a 2-day training course mandatory for GTC members to be allowed to use chain saws under GTC auspices, noting that it may become a general Town requirement. Committee discussion of the proposal indicated clear agreement on the value of chain saw training for chain saw users, but a range of opinion from strong agreement to strong dissent, on whether a course of two days duration should be mandatory.

Freedom’s Way “Trails Day” – This initiative is intended to showcase our region’s hiking trails, historical sites, and other unique assets. People living within and outside our region will be invited to participate in planned events, such as guided hikes, hosted in turn by different towns and cities that participate. Groton’s turn to host such a regional event is scheduled for May 2015. Paul noted that while 2015 is now a long way off, this will be a fine opportunity for the GTC to acquaint people from the entire region with our extensive outdoor recreational assets.

## **New Business/Discussions**

General Trail Improvements: Dave B. expressed interest in an effort to make general trail improvements on several established trails, for example, re-routing fall line trails, addressing dead-end trails, and installing bridges. Some of the trails needing such attention include Groton Hills, Sawtell, Torrey Wood, Floyd, and Hawtree. David B. will make trail-specific recommendations at a future meeting.

“Points of Interest” – “Sunset Point” at Surrenden Farm: Paul F. and Dave B. summarized the proposal made by Scott Stathis to establish Surrenden Farm as one of the first “Points of Interest” as a means of attracting people to use the trails. They suggested an appropriate sign be placed there, along with picnic tables. Bruce E. noted that, while the Conservation Commission has the Conservation Restriction on the property, the GTC should approach the landowner for permission. The owner to contact is the Groton Conservation Trust (Stewardship Committee). There was then a brief general discussion of other “points of interest,” and it was agreed that a list of candidate locations for such designation needs to be developed.

Trails Signage: Paul F. described a regional effort that has just developed for establishing trail signage. There may be grant opportunities. In addition, several towns could use the same sign maker to obtain a volume discount. Steve L. reported having a possible line on a sign maker with the required sign-making equipment. Paul volunteered to put Steve in touch with counterparts in the other communities participating in the regional trail-signage group.

Town Forest Stewardship Plan: Paul F. reported that the trail maintenance efforts of the GTC in the Town Forest were highlighted in the Plan.

Annual Report. Steve L. offered a draft of the GTC’s contribution to the Town’s Annual Report, and requested suggestions for editorial changes and new input. From discussion, Committee members thought Steve’s draft to be thorough and very well done. Committee members agreed to send their suggested content and verbiage changes directly to Steve.

## **Adjournment**

Motion to adjourn the meeting was made at 9:25 PM by Olin L., seconded by Jim M., and approved unanimously.