



TOWN OF GROTON

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Groton Trails Committee

Monthly Meeting Minutes February 18, 2014

Attendees:

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

Visitors:

Bruce Easom, Groton Conservation Commission
Ted Lapres, Groton Conservation Trust
Michelle Ruby, Groton Conservation Trust

Call to Order

At 7:42 PM, Chairman Funch called the meeting to order with the above quorum of Committee members present, as well as three guest attendees.

Approval of Minutes

Lathrop moved to accept the minutes of January 21, 2014; Minott seconded; approved by unanimous vote.

Discussion:

Visitors Ted Lapres and Michelle Ruby, representing the **Groton Conservation Trust** (Trust), talked to us about their deliberations on a **memorandum of agreement** (MOA) submitted by the Trails Committee two years ago outlining how Trails would perform work on GCT properties. Michelle is a co-chair of the GCT's Stewardship Subcommittee with Mark Gerath. They have been discussing how better to use and coordinate the activities of stewards for their various properties. The Trust currently owns 35 properties in Groton. We were invited to communicate directly with the Stewardship group via email, stewardship@gctrust.org in the future. We were also invited to attend a meeting at Lawrence Academy, in the McNeil Lounge, on Wednesday Feb. 26th, when stewardship issues will be discussed. Mr. Lapres explained the liability and insurance concerns the trust has with volunteers working on their properties, and especially with chainsaws. The Trails Committee has been trying since October 2011 to get an MOA in place with the Trust. Mr. Lapres ventured the opinion that Trails can do routine maintenance on existing trails in its properties, excepting the use of chainsaws for now, without advance permission. He asked, however, that the stewardship group be notified by email when such work is scheduled. They will answer more specifically in the near future how the chainsaw issue will be handled, and perhaps offer to sign an MOA after the Trust receives more information from their lawyer and we get a response from Town Counsel on our inquiry about liability issues when we work on private property.

Reports/Old Business

Guided hikes reported on by Lathrop and Minott:

Lathrop led a hike from Groton Place to Surrenden Farm on Sunday, Feb. 9th. Thirteen hikers participated.

Upcoming GTC/AMC joint sponsored hikes:

- 1) Williams Barn/ Sorhaug Woods – Sunday, Mar. 16th, 1PM (Lathrop leading)
- 2) The Throne – Sunday, Apr. 13th, 1PM (Lathrop leading)
- 3) Gamlin Indian Rock/Boulders Trails – Sunday May 4th, 1 PM (Minott leading)

There was some discussion of Will Premru's request to agree on an **Eagle Scout project** under the GTC's direction. Will was on vacation with his family and was not in attendance. The committee seemed to agree that a bog bridge of some sort of design in the saddle on **Gibbett Hill** just below the cell tower would be a good and needed project. This area and its difficulty of passage on foot and on horses have been in discussion for some years previously.

Lathrop is working on approvals for the **Wharton Plantation bridge project**. He expects approval from the Conservation Commission in time to start building when the winter snow clears.

Funch submitted a grant request for \$17,832 to the Mass Department of Conservation and Recreation for the proposed new **Nashua River Accessible Trail**, in the J. Harry Rich State Forest off Nod Road. The total cost will be approximately \$22,290 and a 20% match is required from us for the grant. The review cycle on this is nine months. MARTAB will perform the evaluation of all the grants. The trail will be ¼ mile long and will feature a good-sized riverside overlook, rest stops and benches. If the grant is approved, many permits will need to be in place before commencing the project.

Bruce Easom (visitor) gave status report on the **Squannacook River Rail Trail project** in Townsend and West Groton. After years of discussion, the MBTA, in a meeting on February 6th, refused to lease its land to the towns. It has signaled a willingness, however, to lease to the 501c(3) entity, Squannacook Greenways. The latter believe this is a good development. MBTA must first put the land lease out for public bid.

Legge presented, and the Conservation Committee approved on January 28th, the layout of the new **Brown Lane Conservation Area trail** which will create a very nice and important gateway to the Cox-Walker lands. The trail was initially laid out by Bruce Easom and Wendy Good, then modified somewhat by Funch and Legge. It connects to and crosses over an easement on Chris Corwin's private land. Construction can begin after the snow melts.

Legge submitted the Trails Committee's **annual report for 2013** to the Selectmen for inclusion in the town's annual report. There was a lot done last year by the committee, the report is longer than in previous years, and it also comments on major increases in measured activities.

New Business/Discussions

Riverfest 2014 will be held on June 8th, 11AM to 4 PM.

The Conservation Commission has asked for support obtaining \$200,000 from **CPA funds**. The funds would go to the Conservation Fund, which is presently drawn down to a low level. This fund is normally used to purchase lands for the town that may be on a quick decision timeline. Lathrop moved, Legge seconded, unanimous approval. Separately, but related, Funch asked for approval from the committee to send a letter he had drafted supporting the **CPA funds** for the Conservation Commission. Lathrop moved, Minott seconded, unanimous approval for the letter, to be sent by Funch.

Stathis offered to lead the project to develop a "**Sunset Point**" picnic and hiking area at the General Field in Surrenden Farm. The Groton Conservation Trust owns the property and also has interest in pursuing this idea. Stathis will communicate and coordinate with the GCT.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn the meeting was made at 9:41 PM by Stathis, seconded by Funch., and approved unanimously.