



TOWN OF GROTON

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Groton Trails Committee

**** Monthly Meeting Minutes **** **19 August 2014**

Attendees:

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

Visitors:

Bruce Easom
Hélène Cahen

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 two guest attendees.

Approval of Minutes

Dave M. moved to accept the minutes of the 15 July 2014 meeting; Jim M. seconded; approved by unanimous vote, with Steve L. abstaining.

Reports/ Old Business

1. Eagle Scout Projects – Paul F. reported there has been no related activity since the last meeting. He noted that with regard to the Flavell Crossing bridge project, the Conservation Commission performed a site walk and issued a Negative Declaration.
2. New Cox-Walker Trail Development – Paul F. reported that the trail has been put in from Brown Lane to the easement through the Corwin/Miner properties. He noted that the Cox-Walker Trail requires marking (this has been approved by the Conservation Commission) and that marking the easement section of the trail needs to be discussed between the Conservation Commission and the property owners. Finally, he reported that the new trail loop planned for the Cox-Walker trails complex will go before the Conservation Commission later in August.
3. Gamlin Parcel Footbridge – Dave M. reported that approvals needed from the property owner (GCT) and the Conservation Commission have been secured; the building materials are stacked onsite; and the bridge will be constructed in September, when the volunteer who proposed to help with the project returns from a work assignment abroad.
4. GCT and NEFF Liability Waivers – These were passed out for signing by involved Committee Members.

5. Nashua River Accessible Trail – Steve L. reported that the CPC, although strongly supportive of the project, voted not to fund the related grant at this time, citing reluctance to set precedent for funding grants out-of-cycle that are not time-critical. Bruce E. and Paul F. discussed the potential to pursue early funding from 2015 CPC funds. There was general discussion of potential alternatives for raising private funding for the project. Paul F. will speak with Mark Haddad regarding funding alternatives.
6. General Field/Surrenden Farm “Sunset Park” – Scott S. reported that the originally-planned location doesn’t afford sunset views year round, and that the present kiosk location appears to be the best one from that standpoint. Scott will discuss details of the planned “park” with the landowner, the Conservation Commission, and then with Mass. Fish and Wildlife, which has the Conservation Restriction on the property.
7. Massachusetts Trails Conference – Paul F. reported that this conference, which will be held on November 8, is well worth attending. He plans to attend, along with Dean Marsh, and urged others to participate who are able.
8. Chain Saw Safety Course – Paul F. urged interested committee members to register for the chain saw safety course without delay because slots are limited. He reminded committee members that those desiring to use a chain saw on GTC projects will need to have completed the course.
9. Guided Hikes – Dave M. summarized completed and planned hikes:
Completed Hike:
 - July 27 – Forestry Education Hike in Wharton Plantation, led by Olin L. 6 hikers total.Planned Hikes, all at 1 PM:
 - Sept. 14 – Wharton Plantation, Rocky Hill Section – Joint GTC/AMC sponsorship – Olin leader
 - October 12 – Williams Barn – Joint GTC/AMC sponsorship – Olin leader
 - October 18 (Saturday) – Gibbet Hill to Chestnut Hill – foliage viewing – Dave M. leader (Date moved from Sunday, October 19 to avoid conflict with Town Forest Trail Race on the 19th)
 - November 9 – Gamlin Esker Trail – Dave M. leader
 - December 7 – Gamlin Indian Rock Trail – Dave M. leader

New Business/Discussions

1. Thunderstorm Safety – Dave M. reported that at a recent guided hike, there was disagreement over a decision to start the hike with thundershowers present in the vicinity. He requested that the subject of thunderstorm safety be put on the agenda for discussion at a future meeting.
2. Planning for Grotonfest – Paul F. reported that Grotonfest will be held on September 20 and that we will need to make assignments for booth duty, as well as for assisting with booth set-up and tear-down. He will email a solicitation in this regard to Members.
3. Photo for Montachusett Region Trails Map – Paul reported that this regional trails map will be widely distributed to tourists and others within the region; the map will likely include two small photos of trails-related themes and Groton will be featured in one of those photos. Paul proposed Fitch’s Bridge as the subject of the photo, ideally illustrating multiple concurrent uses (hikers, equestrians, bikers, canoeists). There was discussion regarding best means for obtaining the photo. Paul noted that Groton’s trails and other relevant attributes are disproportionately represented in this map, relative to the content offered by other member communities. Hence, Groton clearly stands out in a very positive way.

4. Town Forest Race – Paul solicited input from Members regarding tentative availability to assist with Race logistics on race day, October 19.
5. Needed Trail Maintenance – Paul solicited reports from Members of any trails with known maintenance needs:
 - Scott S. and Jim M. reported tree falls in the Town Forest.
 - Steve L. reported tree falls on the loop behind Fitch’s Bridge, near Hill Rd., as well as a tree down on the Fair Grounds.
 - Wendy G. noted there has been resistance from neighbors to marking the trailhead at the easement for the Longley I Trail that is located at Paquawket Path.
 - Jim M. reported significant new sapling growth from logging stumps in the Town Forest that requires a trimming back.
 - Paul F. noted that on many of our older trails, the trail markers on the trees are now starting to fall off or become deformed by tree growth. He asked Members to keep an eye peeled as we are hiking and to replace the missing or damaged markers where needed.
6. Squannacook River Rail Trail – Bruce E. reported the good news that Squannacook Greenway Inc., a specially-formed local non-profit organization, has been selected to receive the 99 year lease of the rail bed that will become the Squannacook River Rail Trail.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn the meeting was made at 9:35 PM by Steve L., seconded by Jim M., and approved unanimously.