



TOWN OF GROTON

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Groton Trails Committee

**** Monthly Meeting Minutes ****

19 May 2015

Attendees:

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

Visitors:

Alexander Platt

Call to Order

At 7:35PM Chairman Funch called the meeting to order with the above Committee members present.

Approval of Minutes

Dave P. moved to accept the minutes of the 21 April 2015 meeting; Olin seconded; approved by unanimous vote.

Reports

a) Planned Hikes

The following planned guided hikes and bike rides were noted:

- 5/31 – MRTC “Gift of the Glaciers” Hike/Bike Events
 - Mountain Bike (Advanced) North Groton Area – NDO, GTC 7:45AM, Dave B.
 - Mountain Bike (Beginner) Williams Barn Area – NDO, GTC 2:00PM, Dave B.
 - Guided Hike (Intermediate) Town Forest to Town Hall – GTC 9:00AM, Olin
 - Guided Hike (Intermediate) Gibbet Hill to Williams Barn – GTC 1:45PM, Olin
 - Guided Hike (Intermediate) Town Hall to Gibbet Hill – GTC 1:45PM, Paul
- 6/14 Surrenden Farm trails – GTC 1:00PM, Olin.
- 6/21 Gamlin Indian Rock and Boulder trails – GTC 1:00PM, Dave M.
- 6/27 Ayer-Groton’s “Connecting Communities” event – Hike Nashua River Rail Trail from Ayer to Groton School Pond and back, 2:00-4:00PM, NRWA, GTC, Friends of NRRT, Al Futterman, Darcy Donald

For the MRTC event, Paul encouraged committee members to attend the special lectures on Groton’s unique geology and history, as well as participating in the hike/biking events.

b) Groton River Festival – June 7

The Trails Committee will staff a booth again this year at the festival. Committee members discussed their availability for booth duty and individuals then committed to various time slots and duties on the day of the festival for booth set-up, staffing, and tear-down.

c) Nashua River Accessible Trail Update

Paul reported that the full CPA funding was approved at Town Meeting and that there is a high probability of getting the State grant. Paul described plans for a crucial work party in October to clear the trail path and to plant survey flags ahead of the subsequent main construction activity.

d) MA Open Space Conference Report

Paul reported that much good information was presented at the conference. Particularly notable for its effectiveness was the trail description literature prepared by the Town of Norwell, as well as that town's educational literature on invasive species.

e) Eagle Scout Project – Alexander Platt

Paul introduced Alex Platt, an Eagle Scout candidate who is proposing a project to construct a tree house at a scenic overlook location along a hiking trail. Alex distributed a detailed concept plan to the Trails Committee members. Dave M. asked Alex to describe his project schedule. Alex indicated he is targeting to have all necessary approvals in June, so as to enable construction by fall at the latest. Ensuing discussion established that the land-owner and Cons Comm approval processes would take longer than June to complete, but that if all approvals were secured by the end of the summer, project planning could take place in parallel, with construction still able to commence by early fall. Olin offered to assist Alex with the required Cons Comm submittal. Regarding the tree house design, the Committee members indicated that a ground-mounted structure, rather than tree-mounted would be more secure long-term, and that due to safety/liability concerns, stairs with railings were preferred over a ladder. The Committee members agreed that getting the required landowner approval would likely be easiest for Cons Comm-owned properties, although DCR and NEFF might be very amenable as well. The private landowners would likely be more challenging to work with. The Committee members then identified candidate locations for the proposed tree house project: Harry Rich State Forest (DCR), Wharton Plantation (NEFF), Hawtree, Baddacook, Hayes Woods (GCT), Gamlin Picnic Area (GCT), Duck Pond (GCT), Half Moon Swamp, Kemp Woods (NEFF), Gamlin Crystal Springs overlook on Cow Pond Brook (GCT), Ripley Forest, Reynolds Swamp (GCT).

Resulting action items:

- Contact landowners to gauge interest – NEFF (Olin), DCR (Paul), GCT (Dave P.)
- Short-list several locations.
- Walk those sites with Alex, after which Alex ranks the sites as to his interest level.
- Talk informally with the Cons Comm about likely review requirements for the short-listed sites.

f) Sign Project Update

Olin reported on progress with his trail signage project. He described the need to experiment further with configurations for sign mounting, using a Trex board as backing, to arrive at a mounting method that is both functional and aesthetically pleasing. In response to Committee discussion on the subject, Olin agreed to try to find a way to include attribution on the sign, e.g., "Groton Trails Committee" or "grotontrails.org" in small font. There was substantial Committee

discussion regarding how to denote key trail junctions on the signage. It was decided that the best approach would be to focus on naming all trails, then having the signs direct hikers to the named trails, rather than naming junctions and having the signs direct hikers to named junctions.

g) Bridge in Surrenden Farm

Olin showed photos of the pronounced ditch – challenging to cross – that exists on one of the Surrenden Farm trail segments. Notably, one photo showed a nice, but unauthorized footbridge that an unknown party had recently constructed there. He recapped the historical resistance of Mass. Fish & Wildlife to the Trails Committee’s proposals to place a trail bridge over the ditch, despite the Trails Committee’s having pointed out that trail users have seriously trampled both banks of the ditch extensively, while searching for the least daunting crossing point, and that this has caused environmental damage. Olin then described a site walk conducted recently with staff of Fish & Wildlife, after which it appeared to Olin that those officials may be coming around to the idea of allowing a footbridge.

h) Updating Our Online Trail Maps

Olin reported on his trails gps re-mapping project, illustrating results on a map of the Throne Trail System. That example showed that the re-mapping effort has corrected some significant errors in the current depictions of Throne trail locations appearing on our interactive trail map tool. Olin proposed using the formidable capabilities of the OpenStreetMaps software system to correct wrong trails-location information on our interactive trail map tool. Dave P. described the limitations imposed by copyright law on our use of OpenStreetMaps. He said that we need to publish our own trail location data, then have OpenStreetMaps incorporate that. For Olin to get his corrected information into our interactive trail map tool, he either needs to send a screen shot of the needed changes to Dave P. for him input via the software we use (CartoDB), or Olin needs to learn to use CartoDB software himself.

Discussions

a) 2015 Trails Project Priorities

Paul reminded the Committee that it is very important for us to maintain an active listing of needed trails projects. During discussion, Committee members identified the following needed trail projects: Gratuity Rd. and Sawtell (posts are down – Olin); Groton Woods (possible new trail from Duck Pond Dr. near Forest Dr. - Olin); Cox-Walker (trail leveling and bridges - Paul); Throne (two areas of trail under water seasonally – Olin, Dave M.), Shepley Hill (erosion – Paul); Blackman (new trail – Dave B.); Wharton Plantation and Surrenden Farm (needs maintenance – Dave B.).

b) Scott Stathis Resignation

Scott announced that he is stepping down forthwith as a member of the Trails Committee, but will continue to participate in Committee activities in an ex officio capacity. Paul thanked Scott for his three years of much-appreciated service to the Trails Committee.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn the meeting was approved unanimously at 9:35p.m.