



TOWN OF GROTON

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Groton Trails Committee

**** Monthly Meeting Minutes **** **January 19, 2021**

| Attendees: (Present: X) | | | Visitors: |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|---|------------------|
| Chair | Paul Funch | X | Bruce Easom |
| Vice Chair | Bob Ordemann | X | Greg Sheldon |
| Secretary | Laura DeGroot | X | Peter Cunningham |
| Members | Olin Lathrop | X | |
| | Jim Peregoy | X | |
| | Kevin Barrett | X | |
| | Stephen Legge | X | |
| | Wanfang Murray | X | |
| | Jason Remillard | X | |
| | Lisa Ireland | X | |
| | Derek Cianci | X | |

Call to Order

Chair Funch called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

Re-organization of Committee

DeGroot volunteered to assume Secretary role.

VOTE: Lathrop moved, and Peregoy seconded a motion to approve DeGroot for position of Secretary; unanimously approved.

Approval of December minutes

VOTE: Lathrop moved, and Peregoy seconded, to approve the December minutes as amended; all approved except Remillard who abstained (absent at December meeting).

MA RTP Grant Application – Riverwalk project design

Funch reported that the Riverwalk trail project is eligible under the Recreational Trails Program (RTP) grant if the land is purchased by July.

VOTE: DeGroot moved, and Peregoy seconded, to allow Funch to apply for the RTP grant on behalf of the Trails Committee; approved unanimously.

Last week Funch met with two different trail building contractors from Vermont to discuss the Riverwalk trails design. They will be providing their estimates of the costs for the design phase grant application. The bridge design will be the most complex part of the proposal, calling for either a fiberglass structure or one with iron beams. Both contractors suggested doing two trails, one for equestrians and one as ADA accessible. The trail is too narrow to do a combination (wider) trail. Horses can get around gulfs and gorges and won't need a special bridge for crossings. The northern section of the trail is in the upper portion of the flood plain but is relatively safe from high velocity water damage. The selected contractor will make more detailed measurements of the area as part of the design phase.

Funch has GPSed the trails and displayed a map showing existing and proposed locations, including areas accessed from the abutting Partridgeberry subdivision. The preferred design option now includes an observation/gathering area comprised of stone dust rather than a structure such as a deck, located near the left elbow of the river. Eason asked why the trail wasn't located along the riverbank in that middle section. Funch explained that wetlands and floodplain prohibited trail access; however, much of the existing trail does follow the riverbank. Ordemann asked if there would be benches and tables along the trail; Funch confirmed that these will be included in the observation/gathering area.

For the grant application, Funch has reached out to 11 organizations for letters of support; so far 8 have submitted approval letters. Legge asked why Freedoms Way is included for letters of support. Funch responded that it is a regional organization offering grants that support local cultural/natural resource/historical projects. The land appraisal is still in progress. Funch has met with attorney Aleta Manugian and the purchaser to go over the process of purchasing the land once the appraisal is completed. Funch mentioned we could likely apply for matching funds for this project under the NRWA Wild and Scenic Rivers grant program.

Brown Trail @Chicopee Row re-routing

Funch reported that moving the stone wall to relocate the trail will require a permit from the Planning Board under the Scenic Roads regulations.

Trails Maintenance

Funch displayed a trails map showing the existing and proposed Gamlin Esker trail section near Bridge St. Part of the trail is steep and prone to erosion and the Groton Conservation Trust wanted to reroute the trail to make it more sustainable. The new route was approved by the GCT Board. Funch recommended that this project be on the spring maintenance schedule. Barrett asked if the sheet metal bridge crossing could be made safer (no railing). Ordemann mentioned there is a new wood bridge east of the metal bridge.

Ordemann reported he did some trails maintenance at Town Forest. He asked that members email him if we see tree work that is needed anywhere.

Website and Mapping

Remillard is updating the trails map later this week (Sorhaug trails). He needs to change the java script to help with map rendering. Because All Trails website uses our trails data, the script takes 2 days to run.

Whispering Brook Trail

Lathrop is working with Greg Sheldon on the new trail. The wetlands in the northern section of the proposed trail requires a Notice of Intent and may need engineering plans. He knows some engineers who could scope out the design. NOI applicant would be Trails Committee; Lathrop and Sheldon are working on the application. An April meeting with engineers will determine where actual flooding is located. Expecting project construction in 2022.

VOTE: Ordemann moved, and Peregoy seconded, to offer Trails Committee as official project applicant; unanimously approved.

Mr. Sheldon thanked Lathrop for working with him on this project and appreciated support he received from the Trails Committee. Sheldon reported he formally withdrew his CPA funding request for this project but may re-apply in fall of 2021.

Future of CPA

Easom gave brief overview of CPA and why some officials are questioning the continuance of the CPA funding.

Signs

Dog signs were approved at the December Trails Committee meeting. Funch attended the Conservation Commission meeting and received their approval for installing signs. Twenty-nine sign locations were subsequently approved by Conservation Administrator Nik Gualco.

VOTE: Lathrop moved, and Barrett seconded, ordering 40 dog policy signs; unanimously approved. Easom recommended that the motion set an upper limit on the expenditure. Lathrop amended the motion to include “not to exceed \$350”; Barrett seconded; unanimously approved as amended.

Priest Family signs –

Olin produced a draft sign to install along the private driveway to indicate that no vehicles are allowed but that users of the trail could walk along the driveway to access the trailhead. It

was suggested that the trail sign language needed to be changed to say non-motorized vehicles only were allowed.

The committee discussed updating signage at Surrenden Farm by adding signs at intersections and a map at the kiosk.

Lathrop shared his sign designs for stream crossings. Funch presented a list of potential locations for stream crossing signs and recommended that the committee order signs for the high priority areas.

VOTE: Lathrop moved, and Barrett seconded, to order signs for the high priority areas, total sign cost not to exceed \$160; motion unanimously approved.

Budget

Remillard reported the Trails Committee has \$8,000 from the Town fund and \$1,000 in a non-town fund; roughly \$1,500/year is donated by the Town Forest race. Remillard noted that he believes we should keep \$4,000 as a buffer to cover trailer cost and that a top priority is tools for trail maintenance. Funch will display the Gift Fund and non-town fund registers at the February meeting.

Requests for Letters of Support

Funch prepared a letter of support for the Squannacook River Rail Trail CPA funding application per their request. Lathrop moved to endorse the letter, and Barrett seconded; unanimously approved. Cunningham gave an overview of the project. The Squannacook Greenway is submitting a grant request to the Recreational Trails Program on February 1 and the CPA funding will provide the required matching funds. This phase of the project will complete the trail from the Bertozzi Wildlife Management Area to the Groton border with Townsend.

Funch also prepared a letter of support for the Conservation Commission's CPA FY22 funding request for \$350,000.

VOTE: Barrett moved, and Murray seconded, to approve both letters of support; unanimously approved.

Equipment Purchase

DR Leaf Blower (cost \$1,699) vote postponed until February meeting when Gift Fund register is reviewed.

Trailhead spruce posts (12) need to be replaced at a cost of \$45 each. Discussed possibly using trex or pressure treated material.

Annual Report

Legge noted the report is almost completed.

Adjournment:

VOTE: Barrett moved, and DeGroot seconded, to adjourn; unanimously approved. The meeting was adjourned at 8:52 PM.