**\*\* Monthly Meeting Minutes \*\***

**March 15, 2022**

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| **Attendees: (**Present: X) | **Visitors:** |
| Chair | Paul Funch | X | Wendy Good |
| Vice Chair | Wanfang Murray | X |   |
| Clerk | Laura DeGroot |   |  |
| **Members** | Adam Burnett | X |  |
|  | Jim Peregoy | X |  |
|  | Harris McWade | X |  |
|  | Stephen Legge  |  |  |
|  | Derek Cianci | X |  |
|  | Heidi Charlebois | X |   |
|  | Sheila Devereaux |  X | (Late arrival) |
|  | Darlene Deschambeault | X |  |

**Call to Order**

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

**Approval of February 15 Meeting Minutes**

Vote postponed until next meeting.

**Reports**

Shepley Hill to Longley Rd Easement: Easement grantor Eliot wants Groton Conservation Trust (GCT) easement closed for logging and clearing.

Community Preservation Committee (CPC) Vote: Groton Trails Committee’s (GTC) application for the Nashua Riverwalk project was voted #1 out of 8 applications before the CPC. All projects will likely be funded due to adequate funds and high quality of all proposals. Letters of support received from Destination Groton Committee, GCT, and Seven Hills Pediatric Center were added to our final CPC grant submission.

Perry Land (next to Fitch-Woods): Perry Land of the GCT could possibly connect as a loop trail to Fitch-Woods. Since this proposal will require approval of the GCT, Funch did site walk with a GCT Trustee to explore this connection.

Guided Hikes/Walks Tours: Funch reported that we need volunteers to lead spring walking tours for Prescott Community Center, Hidden Treasures, and Connecting Communities. Murray needs to have volunteers from GTC for spring Prescott hikes as soon as possible.

Bates-Blackman Property: GCT requested a letter of support from the GCT for their Bates-Blackman parcel improvements (including an accessible trail). Funch provided the letter on behalf of the GTC for the GCT’s final CPC grant submission.

Harvesting: Question arose about the harvesting going on at Groton Place and Sabine Woods by New England Forestry Foundation (NEFF). Harvesting is projected to be completed by end of April.

Business Cards: Business cards have been delivered and will be brought to next in-person meeting.

Town Forest Trail Races: Squannacook River Runners generously donated $1,800 towards the GTC gift account, an increase from their last donation in 2020. Next Town Forest Trail Races are Sunday, October 16.

Groton Conservation Forum: The forum exceeded expectations. There was a good exchange of information between the committees and groups. GTC will host the forum next year (~February 2023). Will begin planning for keynote speaker/address at the September GTC meeting. If grants are needed to pay for a speaker, deadlines could be prior to this fall.

Open Space Conference Zoom Webinars in February: Weekly webinars were held on Thursdays at noon. First webinar focused on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion for outdoor activities. Another webinar covered financial context and was dense, including research on the economic value of conserving land vs. cost of not doing so. These presentations are available on the Open Space website. There was a large attendance (200+) and it was quite educational but beyond traditional GTC topics. Deschambeault noted that Beaver Brook trails in Hollis and those at Crotched Mountain have good accessibility we could model after. Funch noted that he and Legge took a course at Crotched Mountain on designing and building accessible trails a number of years ago. Funch encouraged GTC members to take courses that could improve their knowledge of trail building techniques.

Adaptive Trails with Trail Riders: Deschambeault described her experiences in the White Mountains helping handicapped individuals along the trails using Black Diamond Trail Riders, for example:

* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cuKD076xvEE>.
* <https://shorturl.me/aJ3Z>

Is there interest for joint use with other groups? Possibly get a grant to purchase? Work with Seven Hills? Recommended place for storage?

Groton Greenway River Festival June 12th: GTC has been asked to put up a canopy and table; experience suggests benefit of being near MassWildlife table that has live animals and lots of children being attracted. Can share a table (e.g., with Squannacook Greenways, as in the past), have two tables, etc. GTC could lead a hike to/within Rich State Forest, but this requires more volunteers. Discussing handouts and other ideas will be on agenda for April. Display map would be nice (Peregoy to investigate). Charlebois recommended providing QR code to access maps for personal smartphone.

Freedom’s Way’s Hidden Treasures Event in May: Deadline is April 15 for applications to participate. The organization will help with costs (up to $250). Ideas discussed were Gibbet Hill tour, hiking Bates Blackman, others? Also discussed whether Senior Center van/bus was available for use, or Buckingham transportation; Burnett offered to investigate.

**Upcoming Projects**

Rail Trail Connection from Rt 119: Burnett would like to see trail connection from Route 119 sidewalk to rail trail. Project requires initial approval from Matt Amadon, Supervisor at DCR’s Willard Brook Headquarters. Charlebois recommended finding interns in environmental engineering to help with design. Funch recommended alternate connection through public housing next to Baptist Church. Harris suggested another alternate connection from Arlington St. through land that will eventually be passed on to the Town from the owner of ConductorLab (Burnett offered to investigate status with Conductor Lab Committee).

Crystal Springs Bog Bridges: Both Eagle Scouts and Life Scouts could complete these as a project. Legge is in discussions with the Scouts to assess the differences between such projects in order to scope the work.

Crystal Spring Trailhead Post Removal: GCT has asked for removal of trailhead posts on Old Dunstable Rd. due to plow issues (no room); possibly install signs on nearby trees.

Trailhead Post Replacements Needed Around Town: Replacements are needed at McLain’s Woods, Acorn Path, Duck Pond, Skitapet, others? Committee members were asked to notice if other posts around town need to be replaced. Funch will order posts if vendors are taking orders now.

Keye’s Woods Bog Bridge: NEFF’s bog bridge near Peabody Street needs to be replaced. Funch to pursue RDA submission with NEFF’s approval.

Destination Groton Involvement: Murray offered to lead a subcommittee for this effort. Noted that this could overlap with Freedom’s Way and Hidden Treasures events in the future.

Chainsaw Safety Course: Bi-annual MassTrails Conference in November is likely to offer this course. Training is required to cut safely under town’s liability insurance. Walker Korby (instructor of previous DCR courses) should be asked for information on other courses that might be available before then (Burnett will check).

Open Space Clearing on Nate Nutting Rd: Trees have fallen on mill site on Nate Nutting Rd., close to Indian Hill Rd. Charlesbois asked if we could clear them away. Discussion on ownership of the parcel was inconclusive so Funch offered to investigate.

**Adjournment**

Meeting adjourned at 8:50 pm.