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

**March 21, 2023**

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| **Attendees: (**Present = X) | **Visitors:** |
| Chair | Paul Funch | X | Brittain McKinley |
| Vice Chair | Wanfang Murray | X | Kiirja Paananen |
| Clerk | Heidi Charlebois | X |  |
| Members | Sheila Devereaux |  |  |
|  | Adam Burnett |  |  |
|  | Corey Magliozzi | X |  |
|  | vacant |  |  |
|  | Harris McWade | X |  |
|  | Stephen Legge | X |  |
|  | Richard Lynch | X |  |
|  | Jim Peregoy | X |  |

**CALL TO ORDER –** Funchcalled to order at 7:30. Late due to the door to Town Hall being locked.

Funch announced that the Committee will meet until December at The Groton Center, in Room 102.

**VOTE:** February minutes – Legge made motion to approve as amended at meeting; seconded by Lynch; Murray abstained; motion approved by unanimous vote.

**REPORTS**

**Website**

* Peregoy – Polish cemetery has been removed from OpenStreetMaps.
* Ice Line Trail name approved by Conservation Commission; need to get landowner (Chris Shattuck) approval to put on website; Magliozzi took action to follow-up with Shattuck.

**Volunteer Assistance**

* Scout Sudar Meyyappan is interested in helping the Committee to satisfy his service hour requirement.
* Ultrarunner Carolyn Wisnowski of Shirley is also interested in helping to satisfy Vermont 100 service requirement.
* Funch suggested that a lot of clean-up of the trails is needed after the last couple of heavy snowstorms.

**Nashua Riverwalk**

* Funch noted that current plans are to create educational signs and to submit the Notice of Intent (NOI) to the Conservation Commission. DCR revised and signed the NOI on 2/28. However, it is now past the turtle hibernation season so the trail project cannot move forward at this time.
* The Select Board and State Representative Margaret Scarsdale have sent letters to DCR Commissioner to ask for reconsideration of DCR’s decision to remove the rest and observation areas as their removal negates the trail’s accessibility. State Senator John Cronin is also on board and planning to draft a similar letter to DCR. Funch indicated that State Senators James Eldridge and Edward Kennedy and State Representative Danillo Sena will also be asked to request reconsideration of the decision.
* McWade observed that DCR has been vetoing other proposals and felt that determining why would streamline this process going forward. Funch concurred and noted that there are rumors that DCR leadership may change soon under the new Gov. Healy administration.
* Funch noted that two of the small grants for the educational signs have been awarded and 50% of the grants have been deposited in the Nashua Riverwalk account at Town Hall. Funch has met with NRWA staff to kick off the sign design process that should be complete within about six months.

**Subcommittee Reports**

* 25th Anniversary Planning – Legge offered two ideas:
	+ Make something similar to the 20th Anniversary towel.
	+ Set up a hiking series in town where people can discover points of interest around town and receive 25th Anniversary recognition when they complete the series.
* Charlebois offered the following idea: A 25 “call to action” – for doing any of several activities, such as hiking 25 miles; picking up 25 pieces of trash; volunteering 25 hours of time, etc., to get a 25th anniversary patch.
* McWade suggested using QR codes to identify and log the 25 places. There was some consensus that QR codes might not be the right technology for doing this, but further development of this idea might be worthwhile.
* Peregoy offered to develop a page on the Groton Trails Network website about the 25th anniversary. He also offered to look into the QR conundrum.
* Murray offered to do Facebook marketing of whatever 25th anniversary plan is developed.
* Legge requested that Committee members send him all their ideas so that he can compile a list.
* Funch noted that subcommittee volunteers will be needed to carry out any plan that is favored by the Committee.

**New Member Welcome**

* Darlene Deschambeault has resigned. Per Committee vote in February, Brittain McKinley was recommended for appointment by the Town Manager, but this was not done in time for the March meeting. Kiirja Paananen is on the waiting list for a future seat on the Committee. Kellie Walsh has filled out a Committee Interest form and will be interviewed at a future meeting when there is another open seat on the Committee.

**DISCUSSIONS**

* Hidden Treasures, hosted by Freedom’s Way, is soliciting events for May 2023. There is an online submission form for registering events. Events run the gamut of activities, including such things as art shows, apple picking, bird watching, history tours, hikes, gardens, animals, farms, etc.
* Connecting Communities, the genesis of Hidden Treasures, is also organized by Freedom’s Way and focuses on hikes. Funch suggested that this program might have a more flexible schedule.
* The Stewardship Committee interest noted by McWade was not discussed due to the Zoom connection being lost.
* Goals for 2023 – Many suggestions were presented and briefly discussed.

Lynch suggested:

* + Remove large debris (refrigerators, drums, etc.)
	+ Replace 20-year-old trail markers on Gamlin West.
	+ Gamlin bog bridges, with help from others. (Eagle Project of Chris Pincott)
	+ Participate in and/or organize more educational hikes.

Murray suggested:

* + Ongoing maintenance. Possibly use GoogleDoc for real-time volunteering and action, with priority indications. Peregoy and Funch suggested that expanding the “chainsaw needed” messages via the interactive map app to more general maintenance needs might be a simple solution.

Funch suggested:

* + Keyes Woods (potential Eagle Scout projects for bog bridges and dump clean-up)
	+ General Field trail signage (type and locations) as well as mowing (McWade has previously offered to lead this effort)
	+ Kailey’s Way (Groton Hills) bog bridges on the trail towards power lines through GCT’s Baddacook parcel.
	+ New trail over Conservation Commission land along Martin Ponds Road. Needs to be assessed for feasibility and options. This could be a critical connection from Priest Trail to Scarlet and Gibbet Hills, which was lost with the private purchase of Brooks Orchard.
	+ New trail over Harrison Ripley parcel, from Wharton Plantation (Blue Heron rookery) to power lines. This would provide an alternative to the current trail that goes over private property (Bennett Black’s land). McWade expressed concerns about putting a trail through what appears to be high value biohabitat. Discussions with Conservation Commission will be required to understand their priorities.
	+ The trail over Anna Eliot’s Conservation Restriction to Shepley Hills needs to be re-opened now that the logging operation has been completed. Will require coordination with GCT if the easement is moved at all. Eliot wishes to re-open the trail as soon as possible.
	+ The trails in Carters Folly, a GCT property off Allen’s Trail off Rte. 40 need to be gps’ed, added to the interactive map, and marked. The trails connect with NEFF’s Baddacook Woods parcel, GCT’s Skitapet parcel, and are just across Rte. 40 from Wharton Plantation trails.
	+ Angus Acre, off Martin’s Pond Rd, across from Chestnut Hill Rd. has erosion problems that need to be fixed and a stream that runs down the trail requires a culvert, or bridge, and possibly trail re-routing.
	+ The Wiewel Trail, which starts on Skyfield Drive, currently goes down the hill behind the homes and dead ends at private property (Dan Emerson’s home). Charlebois (a near neighbor) indicated that the neighborhood might be supportive of using the strip of land that they all own a piece of to connect with the Blackman Field and Woods parcel. This is an important possibility to check out because otherwise the trail leads only to private property and so maintenance of the trail by the Trails Committee would give the impression that the trail leads to public property.
	+ Trails in McLain Woods and the Walker property need bog bridges in places and a more substantial bridge below a beaver pond.

**VOTE:** Motion to adjourn was made by Peregoy at 9:05; Charlebois seconded; motion passed by unanimous vote.