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

**17 September 2024**

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| **Attendees: (**Present = X) | **Visitors:** |
| Chair | Paul Funch | R | Bruce Easom |
| Vice Chair | Wanfang Murray | X | Jon Strauss |
| Co-Clerk | Britt McKinley |  | Wendy Good |
| Co-Clerk | Bob Fournier | X | Nick Longo |
| Members |  |  |  |
|  | Kiirja Paananen | X |  |
|  | Josh LoPresti | X |  |
|  | Steve Legge | X |  |
|  | Richard Lynch | X |  |
|  | Jim Peregoy | X |  |
|  | Tom Montilli | X |  |
|  | Dan Pierpont | X |  |

1. **Called to order** at 7:05 by Murray. Paul Funch joined remotely. Meeting held in The Groton Center, Room 112.
2. **VOTE:** To approve minutes from 20 August 2024 meeting. The motion was made by Lynch, seconded by Paananen, and passed by unanimous vote.
3. **Chair Report**
	1. Nashua Riverwalk – Progress Report form submitted; Grant Amendment Request form submitted to extend contract end date to 12/31/2025; Contract Amendment form signed by Mark Haddad; Order of Conditions received from Conservation Commission and will be submitted to Middlesex South Registry of Deeds; DCR site walk on 9/25, 10:30 am, to determine educational sign locations; Sign design meetings have been held with NRWA staff
	2. Shed/Garage – Pierpont purchased and installed hooks for tools; Pierpont also purchased miscellaneous items (gas cans, hand broom, bungee cords); Remaining tools and materials (including those for our booth) now in shed; Approval obtained from Town for electrification of shed and good progress has already been made on installation of outlets and lights.

**VOTE** (Signatures): Reimbursement approvals and signatures for shed purchases, equipment repair, and trails signs.

* 1. CPA Grant – We are on CPC’s 9/23 agenda to ask about spending trencher money on other T&E as trencher is not self-propelled and therefore not useful for our purposes; Funch’s suggestions: 2 backpack blowers (one gas; one battery); two 18” chainsaws (gas); two string trimmers (battery); one pole pruner (battery); two or more garden rakes; one or two pry bars; shop-vac (for shed)
	2. Wharton Plantation – Jack Petropoulos removed 2 tree stumps but hydraulic lines on tractor failed twice; Team manually cleared trail of some trees and logs; Jack will return later to remove more stumps and level the trail; Replacing the bog bridge in Wharton requires design, approval by NEFF & Con Comm, and money from a CPA Grant; Montilli and Funch are researching and time is tight.
	3. Boy Scout Eagle Projects – Arthur Johnson (Sawtell); George Woods (Keyes Woods); Tim Yafrate (Throne Hill); George is ready to go (RDA approved); Arthur has submitted RDA for approval; We need to get going on geo-grid and gravel enhancements as well; Tim is working with GCT’s Brian Bettencourt on selecting a project location.
	4. Groton Senior Tax Work Off Helpers – Julie & Richard Chiriboga and Susan Gilbert will be helping to clear trails and report problems via our interactive map tools.
	5. Donation for Stoddart Trail – An additional check for $525 was received.
	6. Equipment Maintenance – Stihl hedge trimmer and DR leaf blower have returned from the shop.
	7. Educational Signs (Invasives and Pollinators) – Both the signs and the frames and posts have been delivered and are in the shed.
1. **Trail Maintenance** – The following parcels have had trees chainsawed and trails trimmed and mowed: Hurd, Wattles Pond, Scarlet Hill, Gibbet Hill, Groton Hills, McLain’s Woods, Rich State Forest; The following parcels have had trees chainsawed and some trails were trimmed: Town Forest, Wharton Plantation, Longley II
2. **Status Update - W. Groton Rail Trail Subcommittee**
	1. Members were sworn in:
		1. Pierpont - Chair
		2. Jon Strauss - Vice-Chair
		3. Bruce Easom - Clerk
	2. Nick Longo would like to be appointed to the subcommittee.

**VOTE:** LoPresti made motion to appoint Longo, seconded by Lynch, approved by unanimous vote.

* 1. Walk with Fisheries and Wildlife (including Natural Heritage) was held over the proposed route; no significant issues were raised.
	2. Obtaining a lease agreement with MBTA is the first critical step that needs to be achieved by the subcommittee.
	3. Work is ongoing to submit a CPA request (for approval at Spring Town Meeting) to cover legal expenses for dealing with MBTA and railroad.
1. **Reports**
	1. Sign Subcommittee
		1. (Montilli) Trail markers have been received. Colors do not match existing markers precisely. Voss Signs has agreed to reprint the green markers. Using common color choices resulted in cheaper cost. Montilli has not yet paid due to reprint.
		2. (Lynch) Pollinator Garden sign location has been approved by The Groton Center. A permit is not required for the sign per Mark Haddad. Lynch and Funch to meet with Williams Barn Committee to discuss sign placement.
	2. Website Migration Status - Lynch
		1. Work was started by Lynch and Funch on site redesign. Property matrix and draft content are in Google Docs.
		2. Scott Lewis (Web developer) to meet with Lynch on October 9th. Will get a new quote. Should be simpler/less expensive since no donation button is needed. The quote will be for initial cost and yearly maintenance. Currently, the plan is to get three WordPress licenses to maintain the content. Concern was raised about the yearly cost and options for paying for this. At a future meeting, we need to discuss making a budget request to Town Meeting for operating expenses.
	3. Design of Wharton Bridge Replacement - Montilli
		1. Need to measure the bridge length and make an estimate of the high-water mark to decide on height of bridge.
		2. Need to design for horse traffic as it is a critical multi-use trail.
2. **Discussion**
	1. MassTrails Conference is October 24th-26th (Thu-Sat). More info at <https://www.masstrailsconference.com/>. The Chainsaw Safety Workshop is 2 full days, October 21st and 22nd. Montilli and possibly LoPresti are planning on attending.

**VOTE**: To approve guidelines for MassTrails Conference and Chainsaw Safety Workshop reimbursements. Registration cost is $50.

Motion to cover the full cost of attending the conference (not the Chainsaw Safety Workshop as cost is currently TBD) was made by Murray, seconded by Lynch and passed by unanimous vote.
(Note that subsidizing the Chainsaw Safety Workshop will be discussed at the next meeting once cost is known.)

* 1. Alternative Tools & Equipment recommendations for CPA Grant.
		1. The need for two additional chainsaws was questioned.
		2. Recommend adding chainsaw safety equipment.
		3. Recommend adding in any tools needed for Wharton Bridge Replacement, e.g., drill and/or impact driver.
		4. Batteries for hedge trimmer and chainsaws
		5. Trimmer string
		6. First aid kits
	2. GrotonFest booth timeslots on 9/28 from 9 to 4: Funch will pick up the booth items from the shed and deliver to Legion Field at 6:30 am; Funch will also bring tables, canopy, chairs. Sign-up sheet was passed around and all slots were filled with two members for each.
	3. Groton Town Forest Trail Races assistance on 10/13 from 10 to 3: Currently this is the only source of operating funds for the Trails Committee. Sign-up sheet was passed around and a few members signed up.
1. **Adjournment**

**VOTE:** Motion to adjourn was made by Peregoy at 8:40 pm and passed by unanimous vote.