



TOWN OF ELLINGTON

Ad Hoc Ellington Trails Committee

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CYNTHIA VAN ZELM
LINDA ANDERSON
JUDI MANFRE

AD HOC ELLINGTON
TRAILS COMMITTEE
Meeting Minutes
May 1, 2019
Town Hall Meeting Hall

MEMBERS PRESENT: Lauren Desrocher, Judi Manfre, Linda Anderson, Valerie Amsel, Rachel Dearborn, Erin Stavens, Cynthia van Zelm, Lois Timms-Ferrara

MEMBERS ABSENT: Cheri Murphy, Pam McCormick

OTHERS PRESENT: Bruce Dinnie, Tom Palshaw, Jamie Sydoriak, Julia Connor, Emily Boone

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Lauren Desrocher called the meeting to order at 6:07 p.m.

II. CITIZENS FORUM: Tom Palshaw, 120 Pinney Street, reported that some work had been done at the Hockanum River Trails, and there were a couple of issues he wanted to raise. He had previously asked the Finance Department what the Town liability was for individuals doing maintenance of trails that are owned by the Town or on Town property. He reported that Felicia LaPlante in Finance had expressed concerns about working on private/non-Town property without any documentation. Trees are falling and blocking the river flow; these trees also collect debris along the trails. Mr. Palshaw stated that this is posing a problem for kayakers. He asked if permission could be granted to clear these trees. Current issues regarding this clearing include the Town not being responsible for river, it being private property, and there is no allowance for power equipment such as chainsaws. He is looking for guidance of how to clear waterways from the Windermere Bridge to the Suspension Bridge. There are four current obstacles; they could get through, but it took some work. A retired DEEP individual from Water Compliance didn't think they would need any water-related permits, but they'd need access to the property and permission to utilize power equipment. Valerie Amsel said people at the Scantic River had been allowed to utilize chainsaws to clear such debris, but currently in Town this isn't permitted. Bruce Dinnie asked if there were trees that could be reached by rope/chain and pulled by a vehicle, but Mr. Palshaw said they were in deep and didn't seem accessible that way. The Committee response was that this was important to do, it was just a matter of getting it done properly with appropriate permissions.

Linda Anderson stated that at the Earth Day Celebration, multiple individuals stated that they found the Windermere Trail very confusing and asked if arrows, signs or blazes could be added. She asked Mr. Palshaw what the process would be to blaze this trail, and if this would need to be done in conjunction with the Hockanum River Trails individuals. Mr. Palshaw stated that signs or blazes could be added. It was agreed that this could be an afternoon project for a group to make these trails clearer for visitors.

Ms. Amsel introduced Jamie Sydoriak, a potential new steward for the Batz Property.

Mrs. Desrocher shared an email from Shay Drake of Decide to Be Kind about the geocaching project at the Batz Property, along with pictures. A test run will be completed to ensure that the directions are correct and able to be followed. Pamphlets will be distributed, marketing it as a “treasure-hunting” adventure. There is no GPS aspect to it. Ms. Sydoriak asked if there were other similar things around Town, and Mrs. Desrocher answered that this was the first project of its kind for the Committee. If it goes well, it may be expanded in the future, but for now it is intended as a smaller-scale, Town-specific program.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. Anderson clarified that the Crystal Lake Food Bank would be setting up at Trail of Treats.

MOVED (DESROCHER), SECONDED (ANDERSON) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE THE APRIL 3, 2019 MEETING MINUTES AS AMENDED.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

A. Earth Day 2019 Recap

Ms. Desrocher commended all of the Committee members for the hard work leading up to the various events that took place on April 27, between the event on the Green and the Girl Scouts cleanup.

13 people signed up for the Trails email list at Earth Day. The majority of the 150 maps were handed out to interested individuals. Ms. Anderson used the event to connect and reconnect with Trail of Treats vendors, and she reported that most will be returning. Sue Phillips from Hall Memorial Library is on board with being involved with Trails events moving forward; the botanical walk is still on for some time in July, being led by some individuals from the James L. Goodwin State Forest. There is a fee involved; the library, as a co-sponsor of the event, has offered to pay this.

Erin Stavens organized a cleanup event at the Metcalf Property with Girl Scout Troop 197 from 9-11:30 am; 10 or so scouts attended with their parents, taking a hike around the perimeter to look for major problems. One tree was down, and it was discovered that the old trail had been reopened, so those areas were blocked off with brush and tree parts. Paths were cleared and cleaned up, and flowers were planted along the front from the kiosk to an adjacent tree. The Scout group will be in touch to do another event like this. Thank you notes will be sent to the individuals that were involved.

B. Bird Walk – Denise Anamani

Ms. Anderson reported that Sunday morning looked like it was going to be rainy, so the Committee discussed the drop-dead date to decide about postponing to the May 12 rain date. Cynthia van Zelm will be in touch with Ms. Anamani to discuss the best option for this event. An email will be sent out once a decision is made.

V. NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Anderson has asked Committee members to compile a list of current and desired projects, now that the volunteer pool is increasing. Dustin Huguenin, Parks and Recreation Director, had mentioned that when he had attended a Boy Scouts meeting, there were 11 Eagle Scouts looking for projects to be completed by December. Rachel Dearborn stated that there are two bridges that currently need building, which may be a good option for one of these projects. A Little Library project has also been proposed at the Batz Property, and there is also a kiosk that needs to be repaired and fixed up.

Ms. Anderson also mentioned that the Committee has been offered storage space at the Recreation Department if any members had equipment or other items to be stored.

VI. Sub-Committee Reports

A. Treasurer: Lois Timms-Ferrara reported that the Board of Finance has been going through their hearings and deliberations on the upcoming budget; the Trails Committee had requested \$8,000 for the upcoming fiscal year, an increase from the \$4,000 allotted previously. A question had been raised at one of these meetings about whether the trails should be funded by tax dollars, but the public reactions to what the Committee has done in the short time they've been working has been extremely positive and visible. Lois recommended looking at what grant opportunities are available; Bruce Dinnie has been in touch with DEEP regarding grant opportunities, and Joanne Tedford had previously mentioned being willing to write a grant for the Committee as well. Mr. Dinnie commented on the importance of building relationships with some of these board members to showcase what the Committee is doing for the Town.

B. Planning & Development: Ms. Dearborn reported that the lines were to be repainted along the proposed Brookside trail; Ms. Anderson asked if a sign could be put up for this "Brookside Mile." Currently, the path is .7 miles. Ms. Dearborn met with David Bidwell, Vice Chairman of the Conservation Commission, who created the trail at the Moser property. Three or four total bridges will probably be needed at the location, and they are now just working on an entrance. Some high school students are interested in measuring and blazing for volunteer hours. Ms. Anderson asked what the lumber needs would be for these bridges, and whether Bolles would be a good avenue for a donation, as they'd expressed interested in being involved similarly in the past, as they have a relationship with Kelly Fradet. A proposed Batz property map and future projects are being looked into. There is a piece of property on Route 83, near the Somers line that's about 57 acres that abuts Shenipsit State Forest that may be worth looking into.

C. Maintenance: Decide to Be Kind would like to do a trails maintenance day, with a possible date of June 22, at the Batz Property. Ms. Amsel is planning on widening one of the trails at Batz on Sunday, May 5 from 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm with a small group. The underlayer of the kiosk is the part that looks bad and the Plexiglas doesn't cover the whole board; the cork or whatever material is absorbing the moisture isn't really necessary. The Senior Center walked Kimball and the trail was in better shape than expected; the bridges looked good. The double-board needs some stabilizing. A little accidental side trail needs to be blocked off as to not mislead any hikers. She attended the Plan of Conservation and Development Update Committee meeting and one of their focuses is a walking/biking area of Town.

D. Community Outreach: Trails Day is June 1, and a hike is scheduled for 10:00 am at Kimball Forest. Ms. van Zelm has asked for two leaders for this walk. Ms. Anderson is planning on attending, and Mrs. Desrocher should be able to do it as well. Other Committee members are planning to be there to assist and guide visitors.

E. Trail of Treats: Ms. Anderson talked to Sgt. Santa about necessary police coverage for the event; it will be \$40 per hour each for the two officers that are needed, probably for three total hours. Miss Stavens is working on acquiring lights for parking areas. Arts from the Heart is going to provide entertainment for the lines, such as dancing and music. Youth Services will offer face painting. Pete Hany of Ellington Volunteer Ambulance Corps will have an ambulance at the event as well. Ms. Anderson will talk to the Fire Marshal to discuss the details of vendor setup and inspection.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

MOVED (DESROCHER), SECONDED (STAVENS) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO
ADJOURN THE TRAILS COMMITTEE MEETING AT 7:38 PM.

Submitted by


Julia Connor