

TRAILS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

141 Keyes Road, 1st floor Conference Room

January 31, 2017, at 8:00 a.m.

Attending: Bob White (chair), Lori Capone (Department of Natural Resources), Spencer Borden, David Clarke, Carlene Hempel (scribe), Jonathan “Jay” Keyes, Ken Miller, Peter Siebert

Members absent: None. Member David Clarke left the meeting at 9:17 p.m.

Stewards present: Lisa Pohl, Bill Robichaud, and Brooke Bero

Visitors: Gretchen Roorbach, member of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Advisory Committee

Minutes: The minutes of the December 27, 2016, meeting were unanimously approved.

Steward Reports:

Barrett’s Mill Conservation Area: Steward Brooke Bero reported that the location of the kiosk at the Barrett’s Mill Conservation Area is in a particularly muddy spot. Also, she mentioned there seems to be a lot of dog waste bags thrown along the trail and in a shrub in one particular area. Committee member Peter Seibert asked if it’s possible to put up a sign that shames dog owners who continue to leave their waste on the trails. Assistant Director of Natural Resources Lori Capone said she will plan to install an additional sign there.

Reformatory Branch: Steward Bill Robichaud reported that someone has built a lean-to structure and a fire pit near Moore’s Swamp on the western-most red trail between Moore’s Swamp and the Cemetery Knoll. He wondered if someone was sleeping there. Lori said she will contact Concord Public Works and the Police Department to look into it.

Committee member David Clarke said that based on the replacement rate of the map guides, Monument Street entrance is more heavily used than the Lowell Road entrance. He suggested there should be another kiosk at the Monument Street entrance, which would contain the enlarged map of to the Reformatory Branch Trail. Committee chairman Bob White said that’s not likely because there is already a kiosk installed elsewhere. Lori said she will seek an answer to that question, but added that the Natural Resources Commission doesn’t own the area where the Reformatory Branch Trail enters Monument Street. That’s town land, she said, but not conservation land. Committee member Jay Keyes asked who owns the land. Lori said the Cemetery Commission and the Select Board. Lori said she will ask but it’s not the NRC’s decision.

White Pond Reservation: Committee member and steward Ken Miller reported there was a dead deer at White Pond Reservation that has been pulled out of the pond and onto the shore. He also reported that a number of plastic trail directional signs had fallen off their posts. He used small nails to reinstall them.

[Emerson-Thoreau Amble](#): Steward Lisa Pohl reported seeing significant bittersweet, an invasive, on the Emerson-Thoreau Amble behind the courthouse. Lori said the NRC doesn't manage that section of the trail. Bob mentioned that there are plans to install a bog bridge or two on the trail where at times it is too wet to walk.

[Mattison Field](#): Steward Beth Baryames reported a couple of trees down on Mattison Field, one on the red trail going out to the river and near the water plant. Bob also said someone removed the laminated map from the kiosk there.

Committee Business:

[Bruce Freeman Rail Trail \(BFRT\)](#): Gretchen Roorbach attended to discuss a number of topics:

- She asked if the Trails Committee members would walk along White Pond to determine where the public trail might be shifted away from the BFRT. Ken suggested walking with a GPS to determine where the route could go. Gretchen said the BFRT will be stopping at Powder Mill Road so this isn't an issue yet. But it would be good to have a plan, she said.
- She also asked for help with the bridge over Rte. 2, which is called Phase 2B. Drawing on a white board in the conference room, she sketched Rte. 2 where the trail and the bridge will be. The bridge was shown diagonally across the road. She noted the State Police stables near Nashoba Brook are on the south side of the BFRT (north of Rte. 2). The town of Acton also has its School Street sports fields on the southern side of the BFRT (south of Rte. 2), and there is a series of trails there as well. Because of this, the town of Acton has requested that the bridge provide access to those trails, as well as access to the sports fields by School Street. Gretchen said the problem with that is there would have to be a very long ramp off the bridge to allow for this. Gretchen asked to have the Trails Committee members walk with her to assess the options. The group tentatively set Saturday, March 4, as a date for a tour of White Pond and the Rte. 2 bridge trails area.

[October Farm Riverfront](#): Jay, Ken and Bob reported that they had recently walked the trail. Bob went through with a chain saw and cleaned up the landscape, including the north side of Holden Hill. The committee members spent time talking about how to deal with the very steep sections of the trail. Peter suggested buying cedar logs to help walkers with the significant decline on Dakin's Hill. Committee member Carlene Hempel suggested posts with ropes. Bob contemplated the ideas and said they have their merits. But he added that wooden steps and ropes rot out. Bob asked whether the steep part of the hill is managed by the Concord Land Conservation Trust. Lori said it is, and ultimately, it's their call on how to solve the problem. Peter said another solution would be having a traverse down the gentler slope between the two summits of Holden Hill. Bob suggested that raking the leaves off the edge of the trail would help because they make it slippery. Ken suggested stopping the trail at the top. David suggested making the trail divide between the two summits. The map would show a solid line (blazed) going down the less steep route and a dotted trail across the second summit and down the steeper slope. The committee members liked that idea.

The committee members also discussed whether any of the trails could be designated as "assessed," which means detailed information is provided to users about trail conditions and the locations and characteristics of

obstacles. The committee decided it would be possible to designate the trail as assessed from the parking lot down to the river and then to the right and left where the trail goes along the river. The assessed map would also need to show where there is a wheelchair turnaround on the trail. Bob said the next step is to go and do some measurements of grade (steepness) and identifying obstacles (roots, rocks, soft spots) as well as the lateral pitch of the trail. There would be a separate map for the assessment of the trail. Lori said another obstacle is that a portion of the trail is owned by the town's water department, and the committee would need to coordinate with that organization to continue. The committee should not expect a formal assessment process to take place until the spring. The topic was added to the agenda for the February meeting. Jay asked about a designated handicapped parking spot. Lori said that the closest spot to the trail will be designated as handicapped accessible. It's a gravel lot and there will likely be a small sign, she said.

[Junction Village Open Space](#): There will be a six-to-seven-acre piece of open space between the Assabet River and the affordable assisted-living development project proposed for the land behind MCI at Concord and parallel to Commonwealth Avenue. There is a question about who will steward that land after its many invasive plants are removed and trails are cut into the property. It is currently owned by the [Concord Housing Development Corporation](#), which is in charge of figuring out an open space plan for the parcel. Bob suggested that it could be conservation land, but Lori said the landowner is not proposing that at this time, noting that the town doesn't usually manage trails on private land. Bob said there is a lot of debris on the property, noting part of the space was used for wastewater settling fields. He said it's going to take some heavy work to get usable trails there.

[Harry Beyer Assessed Trail](#): Bob would like to stage a photo opportunity of a group in front of the kiosk with the new sign in the background. He would like to submit that to the *Concord Journal* to announce the newly assessed trail dedicated to Harry Beyer. David said he would make contact with the Committee on Disability to participate and test the trail in the form of a demonstration.

[Freedom's Way](#): There will be a walk from Concord to Wachusett in June over five or six days to test the proposed route of a similar walk that Henry David Thoreau did in 1842 and later wrote about in an essay called "A Walk to Wachusett." It will proceed for 10 miles a day. The total trail length is 60 miles, even though Thoreau only walked 38 miles when he did it. The walkers will follow the route along the Bay Circuit Trail from Walden Pond to the Acton line. They will then link through other conservation areas, connected by roads. For the event, they're planning to have a shuttle to bring people back to the start of each day's hike. The walk will go from a Tuesday through a Sunday. Peter said the organizers want to establish the walk as a permanent feature, much like the [Bay Circuit Trail](#).

[The Art Ramble 2017](#): Bob said he and Peter went to a meeting about the summer art show at the [Hapgood Wright Town Forest](#) sponsored by the Umbrella [Arts & Environment](#) program. Jen Houle will be this year's curator. She's a Concord resident and a graduate of Massachusetts College of Art. At the meeting, participants went around the table and talked about ideas for what should happen. Peter said there was conversation about making the art more resonate with the environment than it was for last year's event. Bob agreed it should fit in more with the environment. It's up to the curator to make a final decision, though. The group is going to have a

walk-through in April for the artists who are interested in participating. Bob said the artists will be given a \$100 stipend and that the show will run from June through early September.

Chairmanship: The committee unanimously decided to renew Bob as chairman of the Trails Committee.

Other business:

- Peter said there was a recommendation for standardized signage in [Estabrook Woods](#) including trailhead signage, and also some way-finding signage in places where that might be allowed. But there are a few places where the landowners don't want people going through. Peter said he's not sure the Trails Committee has any say and reminded the group that Harvard University's rule has been no signage, period. But he said if trail users are coming from [Chamberlin Woods](#), it would at least be useful to have a sign that says "back to Estabrook Road."
- Nancy Lippe, a former steward for the Trails Committee, has moved to Lincoln. She wants to remain a steward and asked the committee via email whether that would be possible. The committee discussed the issue. Some thought only Concord residents should steward Concord trails. Others wondered whether it mattered. The group decided to have only Concord residents steward the trails.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 9:25 a.m.

Next Meeting: The next Trails Committee meeting is scheduled for February 28, 2017, at 8 a.m. in the first floor conference room at 141 Keyes Road.

Respectfully submitted,

Carlene Hempel