

TRAILS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, April 26, 2022
141 Keyes Road, Conference Room
Concord, MA
8:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.

Attending: Bob White (chair), Delia Kaye (Natural Resources Director), Will Holden (Land Manager), Spencer Borden, David Clarke, Carlene Hempel (scribe), Bill Kemeza, Ken Miller

Members absent: Jonathan “Jay” Keyes

Stewards present: Kathy Angell, Beth Baryames, Alice Galinat, Wayne Lobb, Bill Robichaud

Visitors: Tanya Gailus, Ellen Quackenbush, Matt Johnson (Select Board liaison), Dorcus Miller (Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Advisory Committee liaison), Jack Madigan

Chairman Bob White called the meeting to order at 8 a.m.

Minutes: On a motion made by Carlene Hempel and seconded by Bill Kemeza, minutes from the Feb. 22 meeting were unanimously approved as amended.

STEWARD REPORTS:

Annursnac-Baptist Book Conservation Land: No report.

Baker Avenue Boat Launch & Picnic Area: Steward Ellen Quackenbush and committee chair Bob White filled seven bags of garlic mustard from the path at the landing areas.

Barrett’s Mill Conservation Area: Steward Kirk Kinder pulled several bags of Knotweed and Garlic Mustard.

Cousins Park: No report.

Emerson-Thoreau Amble: Steward Wayne Lobb said there were no problems.

Mattison Field: There has been some flooding, typical of the season. Steward Kathy Angell noted erosion in the center of the trail that is widening just down from the parking lot. Natural Resources Director Delia Kaye said this is on top of the list for the summer conservation crew. Kathy wondered if the new cross trail closer to the road could be posted. Land Manager Will Holden answered that it would be.

Moses Pond/Ridge Trail: Steward Ned Perry reported that everything looks good.

October Farm Riverfront: No report.

Old Rifle Range: Steward Alice Galinat reported that the water level is very low in Kennedy's Pond. There is some Knotweed on the side of Old Mill Road. Delia says the crews have worked on that in the past and will stay on top of it.

Powder Mill Woods: Will replaced a rotted post; Bob also walked the trails to find everything in order.

Punkatasset Preserve: Steward Joe Rigali reported that he has been emptying the trash barrel there and wondered whether, when he's away in the summer, someone could take up the task. Delia said when the barrel was installed, that the dog walkers agreed to maintain it. Delia said staff had done it weekly in the summer but the department no longer has the capacity to do so. Joe added that it's not just dog walkers using the barrel.

Reformatory Branch Trail: Steward Bill Robichaud reported that there are political signs on the trail and wondered about the policy for that. He's been doing trail walks on a weekly basis.

Rivers Confluence: No report.

Hapgood-Wright Town Forest: No report. David Clancy and Bob took care of a tree near the Mildred Circle area. Bob said that the plastic cover at the kiosk has been smashed.

West Concord Park: Kirk Kinder has pulled garlic mustard and Steward Beth Baryames is recommending more wood chips and plantings.

Westvale-Harrington: No report.

White Pond Reservation: Committee member Ken Miller mentioned that the roads are uneven and littered with potholes. Delia said most of those roads are private, and outside the scope of the Trails Committee.

REGULAR BUSINESS:

Land Manager's Report:

- Will said the White Pond Eagle Scout project is under way, which includes hanging rules signs. They will be installed in each of the major entrances to the reservation.
- The town had five loads of wood chips delivered to Cousins Park to refresh the riverside trail as a neighborhood project.
- Steward Bouke Noordzij has painted three trail signs – at the Old Calf Pasture, Barrett's Mill and Mattison Field. The first one to go up was the Old Calf Pasture.
- There is a new blazing post at Powder Mill Woods.
- There is an upcoming business volunteer project with Emergo for which a dozen young professionals will be working to remove knotweed at the front edge of Mattison Field.

Discussion of Warrant Articles 46 and 47:

Article 46:

David Clarke said he thinks the Reformatory Branch Trail's inheritance from the railway is an important responsibility for the town. It's a treasure, he said, one that would likely not be repeated today. He said it's critical to be thoughtful about preserving, maintaining and upgrading it. He said there are indeed problems that need to be surveyed and mitigated.

Bill Kemeza said he is still troubled by the request for \$75,000 as part of the warrant article. He worried that spending that much on consultants would lead to a substantial renovation, which he doesn't believe is required.

Carlene Hempel asked Delia if the town has its own resources to do the drainage and grading work requested in the article. Delia answered that she and Will walked the full length of the trail with Public Works staff to understand what could and should be done to improve both its condition and accessibility. She said they agreed there is a need for drainage mitigation, with Butternut Circle as the most obvious trouble spot. The areas around Monument Street would also require some minor regrading. She said they are looking into applying for CPA funding after putting together a few surveys to fully assess and understand the trail's condition.

Bob said he hopes there will be a to return to the work ~~done~~ proposed in 2018 when about \$75,000 was earmarked, but never spent, for reviewing trails all over town for similar purposes. He agreed fixes are needed.

Matt Johnson, (21 Winthrop St.), Select Board member, noted that the Select Board had reviewed an amended warrant article the night before and voted 4-1 in favor of the article. Previously the board had voted no action. He said the revisions allowed for a recommendation, not an appropriation, meaning the Select Board is not obliged to act on a recommendation. He explained: If Town Meeting says overwhelmingly it wants to act on Article 46, we will have a mandate to do that. If not, we are not under obligation. And even if it passes, we could decide to incorporate it into broader initiatives such as a broader infrastructure plan that includes the Reformatory Branch.

Bill Robichaud, (25 Nancy Road), the trail steward for the Reformatory Branch, said he believes the mantra of the opposition to Article 46 is "if you support it, you are pro-paving. If you support Article 47, you are not pro-paving. But nowhere in Article 46 does it say paving." Studying it is the intelligent way to live our lives, he said. "The opposition group strongly opposes any study of the trail. I believe they fear that if the citizens of Concord participate in a fair and open conversation, the citizens of Concord would lead to the 'wrong conclusion.'"

Jack Madigan, (215 Prairie St.), said he's in favor of Article 46. He noted that many people were once against construction of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail, and especially the people who live adjacent to it. He noted that now those same people seem to embrace the trail and even have placed gates from their property onto it. If Article 46 passes and the town is against it, the study

goes nowhere, he said. He noted the bed of the Reformatory Trail is a “waste dump, that’s why nothing is growing on it,” and believes a study is the best way to access how to move forward.

Tanya Gailus, (62 Prescott Road), said that the recent revisions to the article invoke the use of transportation funding, highlighting what she said would ultimately become a transportation project.

Ellen Quackenbush, (206 Prairie St.), said she believes a study is an excellent idea but believes Article 46 is too narrowly defined. She said she talked to the town moderator about deleting the parts of the article that reference grading and drainage but was told that this article is specifically about grading and drainage and therefore cannot be amended in that way. She said she believes the town should go back to the drawing board and examine all corridors between the Minuteman Trail and the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail, not just this one. She also noted that advocates of Article 46 bypassed a number of town committees, which she objected to. “I totally think a study is the right idea, just not this study.”

Wayne Lobb, (223 Elsinore St.), said that although the people of Concord have a say about the trail, the final decision will always rest with the state’s biologists who watch over the 17 or so rare species in town.

Lola Chaisson, (77 Walden St.), said she believes it is a “false equivalency” to compare the Reformatory Branch Trail to the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail because there is a significant difference between being on a dirt trail and being on a paved trail. She said she would rather efforts go into figuring out a way to bring the BFRT safely into the center of town.

Carlene asked for clarification about what’s possible in this area if there are indeed protected species there. Delia answered that there are two protected species – a violet and the Blanding’s Turtles. She said the state would not allow any changes or work on the site that would “clearly impact the turtles.”

The committee voted 4-2 in favor of recommending “no action” on Article 46 on a motion made by Bill Kemeza and seconded by Ken Miller. Those voting in favor of no action were Bill Kemeza, Carlene Hempel, Ken Miller and Spencer Borden. Those voting against recommending no action were David Clarke and Bob White.

Article 47:

Matt Johnson, (21 Winthrop St.) announced that the Select Board voted the night before to recommend affirmation action on Article 47.

Bill Kemeza noted that he believes there should be a study of the trail, but not one that requires an outside consultant who costs \$75,000.

Bill Robichaud, (25 Nancy Road), the steward for the Reformatory Branch, said the terminology of this article is unclear and ambiguous. He objected to its reference to not allowing the cutting

of trees on the Reformatory Branch. “There is no clear-cutting of trees. That is a ridiculous argument. There are very few trees that would need to come down and they are all very small,” he said about any future hopes to make the trail into a travel corridor. Furthermore, he urged that the town needs to come up with a more formal plan to maintain the trail than relying on him, “a 73-year-old with a rake.” Drainage is a big piece of this, he said.

Jack Madigan, (215 Prairie St.), noted that he doesn’t see anything in the article about protecting turtles and wondered why that was if it’s so important to people who oppose Article 46. “If that was such a big issue, why wasn’t it addressed in this?” He suggested installing mitigating lighting and signage to protect young turtles in their journey across the trail into Great Meadows as a way to both advance the trail and save wildlife. “I’m not sure how keeping things the way they are really helps anything other than stymie things moving forward.”

Ellen Quackenbush, (206 Prairie St.), answered by saying turtles are not mentioned in Article 47 because if the trail remains untouched, the turtles are protected by default.

Tanya Gailus, (62 Prescott Road), said this article was not crafted just to oppose Article 46. She said it was long in the works as a way to confront that planned extension of Bedford’s Minuteman bikeway.

David Clarke noted the tricky context of voting on Article 47 because of the fundamental things it seeks to protect, such as the trail’s natural environment. “Voting for this article is a little like voting for motherhood and apple pie,” he said.

On a motion made by Bill Kemeza and seconded by Carlene Hempel, the committee vote 5-1 to recommend affirmative action on Article 47. Those voting in favor of affirmative action were Bill Kemeza, Carlene Hempel, Ken Miller, Spencer Borden and Bob White. The member voting against affirmative action was David Clarke.

White Pond access from the BFRT: The committee discussed whether to allow access to White Pond trails from the future Bruce Freeman Rail Trail via a 5-foot gap in the split-rail fencing there that leads to the pond.

Josh Galper, (65 Stone Root Lane), White Pond Advisory Committee co-chair, said he and his neighbors fear adverse effects on the pond if trail users are allowed to move along town trails to the water. He referenced a recent study that concluded the pond is under threat and worried that increased traffic will lead to pollution of the water and shores.

Delia said she, Will and Marcia Rasmussen, director of planning and land management for Concord, walked that section of the trail and noted the gap is intended to allow access to the town’s trails, not to encourage people to enter the pond water.

Josh said he and his group of concerned residents are fully in support of access to the trails. “We just want to stop people from going down to the pond. What we would love is for the Trails Committee to suggest putting up some fencing to direct people on town trails.”

Bob said even with signage and rangers, there isn't a 100 percent solution.

Josh asked if the Trails Committee could reroute the trails with fencing to prevent access onto the old Pickard Trust property.

Delia said that would depend on what the conservation restriction there dictates. "Our goal is not to tell people that they cannot get onto our trails," she said.

Ellen Quackenbush suggested pulling together the expertise of various town committees to see what's possible.

Delia said there indeed needs to be evaluation into figuring out what's affecting the pond. The Town has contracted for water quality testing this summer, but a lot more needs to be done to protect and preserve White Pond, she said.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 9:38 a.m.

Next Meeting: The next Trails Committee meeting is scheduled for May 31, 2022, at 8 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Carlene Hempel