

Minutes

Norwich Trails Committee and volunteers monthly meeting

7 pm, February 2, 2022

Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82651305884>

Attendees: (all by Zoom)

Norwich Trails Committee (NTC) members present: Craig Layne and Cody Williams. Absent: David Hubbard

Volunteers and members of the public: Roger Arnold, Jay Benson, George Clark, Jim Faughnan, Bob Fiskin, Stephen Flanders (scribe), Peter Griggs, Nick Krembs (facilitator), Sean Ogle, Peter Orner, Andrew Scherer, Pamela Smith, Brie Swenson and Doug Wilberding

AGENDA

1. **Approval of agenda:** Krembs called the meeting to order at 7 pm. No changes in the agenda were suggested.
2. Comments from those present:
 - Wilberding inquired about the genesis of the VELCO right of way (ROW) on the Woody Adams parcel and the Upper Valley Land Trust (UVLT) role in it. He also asked about a Department of Justice (DOJ) complaint about American Disabilities Act compliance, regarding Norwich Trails.
 - Layne explained how the UVLT acquired the parcel and is transferring it to the town; that the UVLT granted VELCO a replacement access to the right-of-way from Turnpike Road that avoids a stream and riparian forest; and that the parties are finalizing language, regarding the easement.
 - Krembs said that he was unaware of any DOJ complaint.
 - Orner inquired about the status of the pedestrian verge that connected Moore Lane to Ballard Park and now has fallen into disrepair. He emphasized that the crossing to the Ballard Park entrance is dangerous without benefit of a crosswalk or working radar sign.

Guest

3. Roger Arnold, selectboard chair, to exchange perspectives with subcommittee and volunteers:
 - Arnold was invited to speak on the value of trails to Norwich residents, how they should be managed, orderly budgeting of trail maintenance, strategy for trailhead parking, website utility, and on Burton Woods Road.
 - Arnold suggested that the selectboard wasn't very familiar with the town's trail network or how it is managed. He felt that the network should be coordinated in a manner consistent with a revised town master plan. He saw the need for greater coordination with town staff. He suggested that the planning phase was part of a "go slow now, to go fast later" strategy to develop a smoothly running process.
 - He heard concerns that the committee and its volunteers were interested in taking care of what already exists. He indicated that the selectboard would be receptive to an annual budgetary request that described the combined roles for taxpayer and grant funding of upcoming projects. He suggested that budgetary needs should be placed against specific projects, rather than arising out of a fixed annual allotment of funds.

- He heard concern that relying on town staff to write grant proposals would be unnecessarily burdensome to the staff and that the past practice of volunteers drafting grant proposals for the review and approval by the town manager was a successful model.
- He praised the design and function of the [Norwich Trails website](#), but suggested that there might be a rationale to integrate it with the town's website.
- Regarding Gile Mountain Parking, Arnold acknowledged the past work of the committee and its volunteers in laying groundwork for planning an expansion. He explained that the selectboard had allotted funds for the planning department to carry out a study to define the need for such an expansion.
- Regarding Burton Woods Road, he said that the next selectboard, which convenes in March, would be receptive to a revised memo on the topic, based on Vermont League of Cities and Towns guidance that the goals expressed by the NTC can be achieved with a change in ordinance without the need to reclassify the ROW as a trail. He asked that any other requests for a change of ordinance be included at the same time.

Infrastructure

4. Update from the UVTA:¹

- Ogle reported repair of a bridge on the King Arthur Baking Company trail. He has taken the Gile Mountain counter down for maintenance. The UVTA will be reviewing and prioritizing projects for Norwich trails in March.
- Krembs explained that the UVTA receives funding by warrant article to coordinate volunteer participation in the upkeep of Norwich Trails in coordination with the NTC.

5. Reports on recent trail blockages and actions taken or planned:

- Flanders reported two downed trees on the Appalachian Trail, leading from the Elm Street trailhead.
- Swenson reported a downed tree on the Hazen trail.
- Faughnan and Fiske reported having cleared a tree on the Ballard Trail.

6. Trail projects for 2022:

- May Schmidt Bog:
 - Flanders summarized Layne's report of encroachment on the town-owned bog property, suggesting that it was a town-manager issue. He wondered whether the bog was still a valued destination, given the infestation of buckthorn.
 - Benson reported that there continue to be school trips and other visitors that come to admire the lady slipper colonies present in the bog.
 - The consensus was that the Conservation Commission should decide any action, regarding the buckthorn infestation, and that trails volunteers should do an assessment of the condition of the boardwalk with an eye to maintenance or replacement.
- Others: Krembs solicited other ideas for upcoming projects to be discussed in March.
 - Faughnan identified 50 feet of treadway that needs replacement on Gile Mountain.
 - The damage from the vehicle encroachment on the Parcel 5 trails will require assessment and possible repairs.
 - The wet area on the Brown Schoolhouse Road, above the bridge, would benefit from improvement.

¹ Upper Valley Trails Alliance
Norwich Trails

7. Update on Happy Hill turnaround:
 - Flanders informed Arnold that the NTC was not requesting a change in ordinance, just a change in signage, which has not been acted on at this stage.
8. Appalachian Trail Corridor: Report status of communication with USFS.
 - No communication has been received.

Financial

9. Funding needed for 2022 trail infrastructure and sources to apply for:
 - This discussion was deferred to March.
10. Update on Women's Club grant for kiosk signage:
 - Cody reported that the Norwich Women's Club expects a report by April 1 on expenditures, requiring reimbursement.
 - Flanders reported that the kiosk signage has cost \$, to date and that the remaining signage is awaiting updates from the USFS, regarding the Appalachian Trail Corridor.

Other

11. Items for March meeting:
 - Revised Burton Woods memo
 - Continued discussion of planned projects
 - Follow-up on Happy Hill turnaround
 - Update on Appalachian Trail corridor decision from USFS
 - Grant funding needed for trail infrastructure
 - Report on Women's Club grant funding of kiosk signage and other projects.
12. **Adjourn:** The meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm.