

# Minutes

## Norwich Trails Committee and volunteers monthly meeting

7 pm, March 2, 2022

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

**Attendees:** (all by Zoom)

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

*Volunteers and members of the public:* George Clark, Jim Faughnan, Bob Fiskén, Stephen Flanders (scribe), Peter Griggs, Elisabeth Hammer, John McCormick, Sean Ogle, and Brie Swenson

### AGENDA

1. **Approval of agenda:** Hubbard called the meeting to order at 7:05. It was agreed to add “Posting for mud season” after the update from the UVTA.
2. Comments from those present: There were no further comments

### Infrastructure

3. Update from the UVTA: Ogle reported that Gile Mountain Trail traffic was slightly down in the fall, but slightly up in the winter.
4. Posting for mud season: Faughnan noted that the road network would soon be posted for springtime weight limits and it would be appropriate to monitor trails for potential mud-season closures. It was agreed that closure of parking lots was up to the discretion of the Department of Public Works. Hubbard solicited volunteers to monitor trails for closure. Volunteering were:
  - Faughnan: Gile Mountain Trail
  - Hubbard: Blue Ribbon and Ballard Trail
  - Fiskén: Parcel 5Flanders volunteered to include “Closed for Mud Season” signs in his upcoming order for kiosk signs.
5. Reports on recent trail blockages and actions taken or planned: None reported.
6. Trail projects for 2022: The projects were considered and discussed further, as follows.
  - Gile Mountain treadway—No discussion.
  - Parcel 5 damage repair—No discussion.
  - Brown Schoolhouse Road wet area—This area is just up from the bridge and could be addressed with a small load of crushed rock, some heavy-duty geotextile, and hand labor to build a French drain.
  - Heyl trail routing from Bragg Hill Road—Fiskén pointed out that the traditional route is difficult to maintain, owing to the plant growth there. The consensus was to establish the Bragg Hill Road entrance of the trail at the VELCO gate and to explore any bypasses of the VELCO road, higher up, for future signage.
  - Powers Road drainage and treadway—Flanders explained that this completes a walking route that includes the Bradley Hill Trail, Kerwin Road, and Pattrell Road. Fiskén confirmed that it is classified a trail, not a road. The route is subject to reconnaissance, assessment and prioritization.

- Gile Mountain Tower—Any of deterioration of the steps on this town-owned property should be a budgeting concern for the selectboard and subject to contracted services from properly qualified providers. The NTC may have a role in finding funding from conservation interests. In the short term, some bolts may have to be tightened and, later, the steps flipped to present the unworn side. At some point, the steps will have to be replaced, according to the engineering and historical preservation standards in effect at the time. This topic will be included in the NTC report to the selectboard and planning commission.
- Schmidt Bog—Hubbard suggested that this is a valuable community natural resource and proposed that its status and future be addressed at an upcoming Norwich Conservation Commission meeting. Flanders recommended that the outcome of that discussion should determine whether the NTC devotes volunteer resources to the area.
- Woody Adams parcel—Williams questioned what access enhancements and signage were needed.

Hubbard suggested that each proposed project be scoped for the amount of work required and the resulting roster be assessed for prioritization within the capabilities of the volunteers. Swenson emphasized that the town manager should be kept apprised of proposed projects, especially those where permitting or town property were involved.

7. Update on kiosk construction—Flanders volunteered to send Faughnan a list of kiosks, yet to be built to enable him to purchase the required materials before the end of the 2021-22 fiscal year in June.

### **Financial**

8. Funding needed for 2022 trail infrastructure projects and sources to apply to: Hubbard advised that the FY 2022-23 budget includes \$2,750 for trails. A Women’s Club Grant will cover the cost of the remaining bridge replacement on the Ballard Trail. No other budgetary requirements were identified for grant funding in the upcoming season.
9. Update on Women’s Club grant for kiosk signage: Flanders reported that:
  - He needed approval for the proposed signs, presented in the discussion material, in order to purchase them in time for the March 31 Women’s Club grant program deadline.
  - The Happy Hill and Cossingham Trail kiosks depict trails within the Appalachian Trail Corridor, yet to be approved by the USFS. He proposed follow-up with Chris Mattrick, the USFS representative.
  - The grant includes lumber material for signage, which he volunteered to purchase and store.

### **Other**

10. Update on Happy Hill turnaround: A response to town manager, Rod Francis, regarding his thoughts on how to allow for trail parking without conflicting with town operations. Hubbard and Williams authorized Layne to finalize his draft response and send a copy to the selectboard to keep it in the loop.
11. Appalachian Trail Corridor: No communication has been received from the USFS.
12. Memos to Selectboard: Discussion was postponed for the April meeting
  - Trails overview—A memo to the Norwich Selectboard and the Norwich Planning Commission may have some additional topics developed.
  - Burton Woods Road load limit—An alternative to reclassification as a trail.

13. Items for April meeting

- Trails overview
- Burton Woods Road load limit
- Betty Booth Trail
- Schmidt Bog
- Gile Mountain Tower
- Future website map formats

**14. Adjourn:** The meeting adjourned at 8:25.