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David Ormiston

From: William Scavone <bscavone@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, March 31, 2017 4:57 PM
To: johnlanghus@gmail.com; johnpepper91@gmail.com; lcook2825@gmail.com; Mary Layton; layton@valley.net; stephen.n.flanders@gmail.com; David Ormiston
Cc: doug.robinson@vermont.gov; Susan Jorgensen; David Jorgensen; CHILDSEJ@aol.com; Miriam Horowitz; Stan Teeter; Christopher Ashley; George Clark
Subject: Norwich Select Board Correspondence: Ordinance request for Gile Mountain Trail/Norwich Town Forest control

Dear Norwich Select Board,

We, as property owners that abut either side of the Norwich Town Forest and Gile Mountain trailhead and parking, would like to bring to your attention a recent firearms incident that occurred on the trail, which comes to within 300-400' of our houses.

On Thursday, 23 March 2017, I (Bill Scavone), my wife (Miriam Horowitz), and our neighbor (David Jorgensen, on the opposite side of the Gile Mountain Trail), heard a rapid series of gunshots from the nearest point where the trail bisects our properties.

I believed them to be from a handgun. I called out for the person to "Stop shooting, there are houses and people." There was another series of shots, after which I yelled louder for the person to stop, and no more shots were fired. I called David Jorgensen, who confirmed the shots were from the trail. Shortly thereafter I saw a car driving down Turnpike Road and called in a description to Norwich PD. Chief Robinson was able to apprehend 3 people in the car at New Boston Rd, supported by the State Police and other NPD officers. A .40 caliber or 9mm semi-automatic gun was found as well as narcotics.

While two were charged for the drug infractions, the gun was returned to its owner because NPD didn't have the authority under Vermont statutes to charge them. It is hoped that the Lyme police will follow up as the person apparently had been barred from purchasing a gun in the past.

Neighbors of the trail have been experiencing increased disturbances of the peace in the past 3 years since it has become much more popular beyond Norwich proper: eg., large groups making noise at all hours, trespassing (including urination in the roadway and children climbing on property owners' woodpiles, blocking driveways), uncontrolled dogs harassing and killing livestock, speeding, and parked cars blocking the roadway to residents and emergency vehicles. These issues have already been brought to attention via David Ormiston, the trail committee, and in casual discussions with some select board members, current and past.

This recent event is one of those we'd feared but hoped would not come to pass. When I checked out the site the next day, I found ad hoc targets (plastic cup, bottle, and deli container) placed in such a way that our house was directly down range and down hill, less than 400'. There was no way a sober and responsible person would have NOT known that anyone was close by, as I had been using my chain saw adjacent to our house just prior to the shots being fired.

The shooters apparently told the police that they had called for and received "permission" to shoot in the forest, but neither the police nor the Town Clerk had been contacted, even if such permission could have been given.

What we have been hoping for, and now see as an absolute necessity after this event, is for the town to exercise greater control of the use and access of the land. We propose the amendment of current ordinances or drafting of new ordinances to give the NPD a statutory basis to enforce inappropriate uses of the town forest, especially in relation to the trail. We hope that the select board and town manager will look into developing reasonable statutes that preserve the peace and safety of neighbors of the trail as well as users.

In addition to enacting measures to control firearms usage on the trail (and perhaps other trails owned by the town as well) we support an ordinance that would define what a trail closure is (mud season, dusk-dawn, etc.) and allows the police to enforce trespassing at those time and provide a future deterrent. Even though the road has been clearly marked from the village to the trailhead, people were flaunting the closure as this was being written. We would also like to have the roadway blocking issue addressed.

We are confident that the Norwich Police Department will be supportive of appropriate measures and can give advice as well as information regarding previous complaints.

We thank you for your consideration of this matter and look forward to a continued discussion and process to find solutions.

Sincerely yours,