

Minutes of the Norwich Trails Committee for March 6, 2019

Present: George Clark, Gered Dunne, Jim Faughnan, Bob Fiskien, Steve Flanders, Peter Griggs, Elliot Harik, David Hubbard, Nick Krembs, Sean Ogle, Cathie Redpath, Liz Russell, Brie Swenson, John Wiggin

In a correction for the February minutes, it was reported that the Connector Trail between Brookmead and the Blue Ribbon Trail is crossed by a logging access route but is not within the area being logged this winter.

A summary statement about a proposed bridge replacement on Brown School House Road where it crosses Charles Brown Brook has been prepared and provided to Town Manager Herb Durfee. A replacement bridge is a top priority for the Trails Committee. Funding for the bridge remains to be obtained. Initial indications are that obtaining state permitting to authorize such a bridge will not be a problem.

This spring after snow melt, a walk is to be held to view trails, both authorized and unauthorized, crossing the Appalachian Trail Corridor (ATC). Walk participants are to include representatives from organizations charged with regulating and maintaining the ATC, members of the Trails Committee, and other interested individuals. Before that walk, the Trails Committee plans to have a proposal recommending which trails are to be continued. Steve Flanders had prepared and then distributed at the meeting handouts providing information on relative use of existing crossings of the ATC. Four crossings were recommended for retention. During ensuing discussion, it was proposed that one relatively new trail would be best for a bike crossing of the ATC and would therefore be a better choice as a retained trail than one of the initial four proposed crossings. Steve Flanders is to email Holly Knox of the US Forest Service concerning details of a draft for part of a proposal intended for eventual submission from the Trails Committee.

As a clarification for discussion at the February meeting, it was noted that the fund called the "Conservation Trust Fund" in earlier documents from the Norwich Conservation Commission (NCC) is restricted in use to assist acquisition of land and cannot be used for planning purposes. The NCC is responsible for recommending expenditures from that fund, and any prospective purchases must then be approved by the Select Board.

An article on the ballot of March 5 including support for commuter bike trails was narrowly defeated, but there appears to be a substantial interest among residents in promoting such routes. Such new bike trails presumably might generally be near or alongside existing roads. If so, an organization for planning such routes might appropriately include representatives from several town commissions and committees. The Trails Committee would welcome having representation in such a group.

The Trails Committee has the intention of again meeting with the Conservation Commission, but no date has yet been set.

The committee was advised that markings along the Blue Ribbon Trail are insufficient for winter use.

New road signs from the Department of Public Works are to indicate restrictions on public use of the upper part of Turnpike Road during the upcoming mud season. Use of the Gile Mountain Trail would accordingly be expected to be reduced while the road restrictions are in effect.

Trails in the Milton Frye Nature Area are to be closed for about a week during either April or June to enable forest management under the plan adopted by the Conservation Commission.

Respectfully submitted,
George Clark