

Minutes of the Norwich Trails Committee for May 1, 2019

Present: George Clark, Jim Faughnan, Bob Fiskin, Steve Flanders, Peter Griggs, Doug Hardy, Nick Krembs, Craig Layne, John McCormick, Alex Northern, Sean Ogle, Gerry Plummer, Cathie Redpath, Liz Russell, John Wiggin

Parcel 5 and Cossingham Road Farm Trails remain closed because they have not yet dried out. Gile Mountain Trail is also closed until access road conditions are satisfactory for increased traffic. Trails in general remain wet partly because of recent rains and cool temperatures. In April, Doug Hardy cleared numerous blowdowns from the upper Ballard and Brown School House Road trails.

On Saturday May 11, a work session is to include a cleanup of the Connector Trail linking Brookmead with the Blue Ribbon Trail. Participants are to meet at 8 AM with parking in the log landing on Beaver Meadow Road not far west of the Sigler driveway
As for work sessions generally, workers should bring work gloves and drinking water. Reminder emails are to be sent closer to the time of upcoming work sessions.

For the following work session, on Sunday May 19, participants are to meet at 8 AM in the parking lot of the former town pool and go from there to the work area.

Plans for the June 16 work session are to be discussed at the June meeting of the committee.

On May 8, Chris Temple of DeWolfe Engineering, together with town officers and a few members of the committee, is to conduct a site visit to determine what is needed to allow construction of a new bridge to replace the former one which collapsed over Charles Brown Brook on Class IV Brown School House Road. A grant application has been submitted by the committee to request funding for subsequent planning for the new bridge.

At a Selectboard meeting on April 24, a proposal from the committee for expansion of the Gile Mountain Trail parking lot was discussed. Although no action was taken by the Selectboard, numerous thoughtful comments and suggestions were made by members of the audience about parking, the Gile Mountain parcel, and traffic on Turnpike Road. With large numbers of visitors coming to the Gile Mountain Trail, especially during peak times such as fall foliage season, continuing attention will be needed to questions of how best to manage use of the area. It was noted later in this trails meeting that the Conservation Commission supported expansion of the Gile parking lot.

A draft quarterly report of committee activities has been prepared and after some revision can be submitted by the chair. It was proposed that subsequently an annual report, rather than quarterly reports, might suitably encompass committee activities and might be included in the annual Town Report.

The possibility of starting a Trails Committee website was favorably considered. This could be done relatively inexpensively and could be useful not only in communicating with town residents

but also with the large number of out-of-town visitors attracted by the Gile Mountain Trail and other trails, including the Appalachian Trail.

With regard to trails crossing the Appalachian Trail Corridor (ATC), the committee is moving forward with proposals and discussions with the US Forest Service and landowners abutting the corridor. The question was raised as to access for horseback riding on trails within the corridor, and the committee proposal about trails within the corridor is to be reexamined to consider horses while taking into consideration the pertinent Forest Service regulations. The date for a field trip to view proposed trails across the corridor has not yet been scheduled. A proposed agenda for that field trip includes sessions for public comments both before and after the field trip to be held in a readily accessible location such as Tracy Hall.

Craig Layne reviewed April 16 Conservation Commission meeting discussions concerning environmentally sensitive locations in town. A substantial amount of information is presently available in maps available online. The Conservation Commission is planning two pilot studies, one within the ATC and the other on a privately owned parcel, to determine the usefulness of available information in planning for trail routes. Craig Layne provided and discussed a list of 16 conservation-related topics to be considered in planning for trails. Craig Layne is to be meeting with Rod Francis of Planning and Zoning to consider possibilities for new commuter trails proposed to reduce use of motor vehicles in town.

Respectfully submitted,
George Clark