



# Minutes

## Norwich Trails Committee and volunteers monthly meeting

7 pm, January 6, 2021

Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87549007740>

### Attendees:

*Norwich Trails Committee members:* Craig Layne, Cody Williams, (Absent: David Hubbard)

*Volunteers and members of the public:* Nick Krembs (facilitator), Stephen Flanders (scribe), George Clark, Jim Faughnan, Peter Griggs, John McCormick, Sean Ogle, Gerry Plummer

### AGENDA

A quorum of the Norwich Trails Committee was present, when it came to order at 7 pm.

1. *Approval of agenda*—Flanders summarized the agenda. There were no suggested changes.
2. *Comments from those present*—No one offered comments about matters not on the agenda.

### Trail infrastructure

3. *Reports on recent trail blockages and actions taken or planned*—Cleanup of fallen trees and other minor issues were reported for the Gile Mountain and King Arthur trails and a large tree cut up in the Norwich Nature Area.

The question arose, regarding which organization is responsible for taking care of the King Arthur Trails. It was suggested, without objection, that Norwich Trails volunteers would be share involvement with the Upper Valley Trails Alliance (UVTA), as offered by Ogle.

4. *Inventory available on Google Sheets*—Flanders announced the accessibility of the information contained in the trail infrastructure inventory through the Norwich Trails website at <https://norwichtrails.org/get-involved/>. There was discussion, regarding further inventory requirements. Flanders suggested that the inventory was complete, regarding most built infrastructure, but would need to be expanded to include signage.
5. *Brief report on bridge replacement on Ballard Trail*—Faughnan summarized the work done to replace a bridge on the Ballard Trail on November 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>. He explained that volunteers removed the old bridge on the 13<sup>th</sup>. And that a smaller crew decided to finish project on Saturday on the 14<sup>th</sup>.

Krembs asked about the trail work on the Upper Ballard Trail, accomplished by the UVTA. Ogle reported placing stepping in bottomlands that wouldn't support a bridge, using a hoist. Krembs approved of the work. He spoke of a possible project for steps, nearby.

6. *Update on concrete parking lot barriers at the new Brown Schoolhouse Road bridge*—Faughnan reported how the three concrete blocks had arrived on their way back from

another location. Faughnan subsequently received a commitment from the Chief of the Department of Public Works to remove two of the blocks, but early winter weather intervened.

7. *Trailhead kiosks budgeted for FY 2021-22*—Flanders made reference to illustrated discussion material in the meeting packet, when he explained that the Norwich Trails Committee \$2,700 budget request for FY2021-2 under the NCC “Trails” line item was to cover the cost of materials for kiosks at the following locations:

- Installation of *large kiosks* at the following trailheads: Upper Ballard, Heyl (Elm Street), Tucker, Cossingham, and Burton Woods, Brown Schoolhouse (lower)
- Installation of *small kiosks* at the following trailheads: Bradley Hill, Heyl (Bragg Hill Road), and Brown Schoolhouse Road (Bragg Hill Road)

These locations are subject to further discussion, as is the design of the kiosks, themselves. Plummer observed that the Parcel 5 kiosk now serves the Brown Schoolhouse side, as well, and that the two should have coordinated information.

The question at hand was, who would construct them and what information would be included? Faughnan indicated that he could help in the construction and suggested building a prototype or two with the materials on hand.

The following content was suggested for large kiosks, placed at trailheads with off-road parking lots, subject to variation, based on site context:

- Large map of trails connecting to trailhead
- Small trail system map
- Posted guidelines, including dog and trail etiquette and seasonal notifications
- Web URL and contact info

The following content was suggested for small kiosks, placed at trailheads with roadside parking:

- Small map of trails connecting to trailhead
- Web URL and contact info

It was agreed that these ideas should be developed further for an upcoming meeting.

8. *Signage standards*—Flanders introduced the topic, making reference to materials in the meeting packet, regarding locations, information provided, materials, and lettering of trail signs.

Discussion arose about the amount of standardization needed. It was agreed that the signage didn’t need to be “professional”, that a variety of styles of signs and blazes is OK and that existing ones should remain, as long as they were serviceable.

It was agreed to evolve the concept in subsequent meetings, starting with forming a signage working group of volunteers in the February meeting, which would report in March. Thereafter, an inventory of locations needing signage could be conducted.

9. *Proposed 2021 trail work projects*—Krembs asked for a group assessment on possible Norwich Trails volunteer projects, as follows:
- a. *Upper Ballard bank and gully crossing at area where the trail approaches the brook*, which now has a stepping stone. Krembs recommends keeping the trail there with the installation of six to eight steps, using a hoist. There was no opposition to this idea as a Norwich Trails or UVTA possible project.
  - b. *Access to Betty Booth trail on the former Pepper property*: Krembs asked whether there was interest in supporting Brie Swenson’s engagement with the landowners to permit access to their trails. No opposition to the idea was voiced.
  - c. *Treadway improvement at the Ballard Park end of Ballard Trail*: Krembs described the condition of the first half-mile of trail, starting at Ballard park, as needing improvement and protection from seasonal runoff, ponding and flooding. After some discussion, Krembs was invited to assemble a small working group to look at the site in the next few weeks and develop a first-draft scope of work to bring back to the volunteers to determine whether the project was suitable for them or for some other group in late spring.

The status of the yet-to-be-implemented improvements with crushed rock at the beginning of the trail were briefly noted and discussed.

### **Trail use**

10. *Safe use of trails on town land during hunting season*—Layne reported that a citizen had posed questions about town liability, regarding possible hunting accidents, and that the selectboard sought the Norwich Trails Committee’s perspective.

Those present strongly agreed that trails should not be closed during hunting season, but that the kiosks at trailheads could alert users, regarding safety on trails during that period. Those present felt that they could offer no legal perspective on liability.

11. *Possible adoption of trail*—Flanders described the informal trail from Cossingham to powerline ROW on the northern edge of the Appalachian Trail corridor as having a potential to form loop with AT and Heyl Trail, accessed from the top of Elm Street. Two of the three landowners involved support the idea. A third is unenthused. Faughnan offered to follow up with that landowner to see if an accommodation can be arrived at. No opposition to adopting this trail was voiced.

### **Financial**

12. *Trails infrastructure categories for funding by 2021 grants*—During discussion the following suggestions were made, subject to further consideration as the grant season grows closer:

- Trail signs, subject to an identification of where they are needed
- Plastic-laminated kiosk information
- Benches at the end of the Brown Schoolhouse Road bridge for handicapped visitors

The \$96 annual cost of hosting the Norwich Trails website was discussed. To date, Plummer has paid the annual subscription, but would appreciate reimbursement. The idea of rolling long-term hosting of the website into a grant request was discussed.

13. *Planning for FY 2022-23 budget*—It was agreed to defer discussion on this topic until the February meeting. The suggested theme was trailhead parking.

#### **Other**

14. *Norwich Historical Society “Discovering Norwich” program series*—Flanders, Krembs and Plummer volunteered to develop website material to describe family-friendly winter hiking opportunities and the equipment needed to enjoy them safely.

15. *Continuation of the Discover Norwich Trails program in 2021*—Flanders reported that he and Brie Swenson, the Norwich Recreation Director, had agreed to discuss a collaboration, as the hiking season approaches.

16. *Items for February meeting*—The following topics were suggested:

- a. Infrastructure inventory: Signage locations
- b. Signage standards
- c. Follow up on Grant proposal ideas
- d. 2022-3 budgetary suggestions
- e. Clarification of the purchasing policy for trails
- f. Update on the status of the Betty Booth and Heyl Trail concepts

#### **17. Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm.