



# Minutes

## Norwich Trails Committee monthly meeting

7 pm, May 5, 2021

**Zoom:** <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81843241733>

### **Attendees:**

*Norwich Trails Committee members present:* David Hubbard, and Cody Williams *Absent:* Craig Layne

*Volunteers and members of the public:* Nick Krembs (facilitator), Stephen Flanders (scribe), George Clark, Jim Faughnan, Bob Fiskens, Peter Griggs, Elisabeth Hammer, John McCormick, Sean Ogle, Cathie Redpath, Gerry Plummer, Brie Swenson

### **AGENDA**

The Norwich Trails Committee came to order at 7 pm.

1. *Approval of agenda*—Krembs summarized the agenda. He suggested adding mention of T-shirts for trail workers, upgrade of Brown Schoolhouse Road, and regularizing trail work days to the agenda. There was no objection.
2. *Comments from those present*—Krembs invited comments about items not on the agenda.
  - Krembs reported that Jim Faughnan has Norwich Trails-themed T-shirts for sale to those who volunteer on our trails. They are available in assorted sizes for \$10, each.
3. Report on fund balances available for trails—There was nothing to report, this month.

### **Trail infrastructure**

4. Reports on recent trail blockages and actions taken or planned
  - Fiskens reported on the clearing of a large downed tree on the Ballard Trail downstream of the stairway to heaven.
  - Faughnan on the clearing of a dead tree on the Gile Mountain Trail.
5. Work days to schedule:
  - Krembs suggested scheduling a work day for every upcoming month. The discussion suggested that there is enough work to justify such an arrangement.
  - The following dates were identified: June 13<sup>th</sup>, July 18<sup>th</sup>, August 15<sup>th</sup>, September 19<sup>th</sup>, and October 17<sup>th</sup>.
  - a. Upper Loveland Trail
    - Fiskens had reported on the degraded quality of the Upper Loveland Trail, which is a former town road that connects Upper Loveland Road with Maple Hill Road. He recommended developing a narrow treadway plus brush cutting. He suggested a reconnaissance for planning the work, followed by a work day.
    - The work day is scheduled for May 16<sup>th</sup> at 0800.

- b. Upper Ballard Trail
  - Discussion derived from a trail survey of the section between the Brown Schoolhouse Road and the Grand Canyon, conducted by Flanders at the suggestion of Hammer, which identified potential locations for puncheons or other features, plus a possible relocation at a point where the brook periodically floods and scours the trail.
  - Hubbard suggested puncheons or stepping stones should occur at chronically wet places, where there is evidence of traffic bypassing the area and causing erosion.
  - A reconnaissance walk-through is scheduled for May 22<sup>rd</sup> for those interested in participating. They will meet at 0900 at the Parcel 5 parking lot.
- 6. Planning scope of work on Lower Ballard Trail—Discussion of the proposed scope of work for 2022 from Upper Valley Trails Alliance:
  - Krembs said that he was looking for reactions to the concept of making the lower Ballard Trail handicap accessible, because follow-up requires coordination with other stakeholders.
  - Ogle gave an overview of the proposed scope of work given by the Upper Valley Trails Alliance. He cited the \$54,000 estimate being the upper limit, assuming curbing on both sides of a five-foot-wide treadway. ADA specifications allow for a treadway of between three and five feet in width. The estimate includes \$15K for materials and \$10K for a heavy machine operator.
  - The consensus was to move forward to the next stage.
- 7. Trail information standards: Working group report on blazes
  - Input received in April on the draft [Trail Information Standards](#) suggested a re-look at the recommendations for blazing trails. Williams convened the working group and reported on their recommendations.
  - Williams described mix of current markers. The previous approach suggested plastic 2 x 6-inch plastic markers for their ease of installation, tidiness, visibility, and durability, but a second look suggested that solution might be incongruous with the natural settings of our trails. The working group decided that tidy painted blazes would be nicer and sufficiently durable. There isn't a need to paint obvious trails.
  - Williams suggested training those interested in applying painted markers and initially working on the Blue-Ribbon Trail, which is the least well marked. Work on that trail will require confirmation of permission from landowners.
- 8. Brown Schoolhouse Bridge (BSB) and Happy Hill (HH) parking areas:
  - a. Report on proposed action for BSB:
    - Faughnan reported that the plan is to substitute boulders for the concrete waste blocks, currently blocking and delineating the parking area at the BSB. Graham Webster is the contractor. Work has not yet commenced. The parking area will not feature signage, until a need is identified.
  - b. Report on discussion about HH parking:
    - Flanders reported on his discussion with Larry Wiggins regarding the advisability and steps required for expanding trailhead parking at the top of Happy Hill Road. Wiggins is awaiting a discussion with the town manager and the acting chief of police about what measures may be appropriate at that location. Wiggins indicated that a wetlands permit

would be required to add parking capacity. Flanders intends to contact some engineering firms to identify a budgetary figure for such permitting work.

9. Planning for “kids’ bridge”—Identify next steps:

- Swenson provided an update on the proposed pedestrian bridge across brook from near the American Legion Hall to Huntley Meadow. She foresees organizing in June for construction. Engineering drawings have been developed for the abutments, which will allow Graham Webster to estimate cost and execute sitework. The zoning administrator will use the drawings as a basis for a permit. Funds are not yet in place to buy the bridge. Once ordered it will require a six-week lead time until delivery.

10. Around Norwich Trails program—Coordination with Norwich Trails volunteers

- Swenson reported that this program is [posted on town website](#). It offers one event per month through August on Saturdays at 0800 for runners and cyclists and 1000 for walkers. Flanders will link the program from the Norwich Trails website. He suggested that Norwich Trails can supply volunteers, as needed. Can do stories, if a representative is present.

### Trail use

11. Recreational hiking program—This topic was covered in 10.

### Financial

12. Benches for the Brown Schoolhouse Bridge and Ballard Trail

- Faughnan reported that the bench is in hand. Installation can occur after waste blocks are cleared. Swenson offered to coordinate its placement at the far end of the BSB with the town manager.

13. Clarification of purchasing procedures: No new information has been received.

14. Report on 2021 Norwich Women’s Club grant applications:

a. Lower Ballard Trail:

- Hubbard submitted a grant application to the Norwich Women’s Club on behalf of the Land Management Counsel. If funded, work will be done on the treadway of the lower Ballard trail. Additionally, the A-frame bridge will be replaced.

b. Signage:

- Williams submitted a grant application to the Norwich Women’s Club to fund trail kiosk signage and other signs elsewhere on trails.

15. Planning for FY 2022-23 budget:

- Flanders introduced a draft memo, advising the selectboard on parking expansion at several location. The group decided that more discussion was needed to establish consensus on this topic.

### Other

16. Brown Schoolhouse Road

- Krembs suggested that the Norwich Trails volunteers might take on the improvement of the route.
- Hubbard reported that the Land Management Council has discussed this concept with members of the mountain bike community. The emerging concept is for them to build a “flow trail”.

- It was concluded that any Norwich Trails action would await the results of the initiative already in place.

17. Items for June meeting

a. Further organizing for the “Kids’ Bridge”.

- Site staging area
- Construction manual
- Tools needed
- Number of volunteers and supervisors needed
- Training needed (video, etc.)

b. Discuss parking areas.

c. Feedback on Appalachian Trail Corridor from the USFS in Vermont.

18. Items for future meetings:

- a. Developing a trails master plan, as required by the 2020 Norwich Town Plan.
- b. ADA access for the lower Ballard Trail

**19. Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm.