



Minutes

Norwich Trails Committee and volunteers monthly meeting

7 pm, July 7, 2021

Location: Kearney-Niles Pavilion, Huntley Meadows

Attendees:

Norwich Trails Committee (NTC) members present: Craig Layne and Cody Williams *Absent:* David Hubbard

Volunteers and members of the public: Nick Krembs (facilitator), Stephen Flanders (scribe), George Clark, Jim Faughnan, Bob Fisker, Elisabeth Hammer, Doug Hardy, Cathie Redpath, and approximately nine other members of the public

AGENDA

1. *Approval of agenda*—Krembs opened the meeting at 7:10. He introduced himself as facilitator, introduced the two Norwich Trails Committee members present, the scribe, and described the distinction in roles between the appointed committee members and the volunteers. He asked for a show of hands to identify the agenda-topic interests of those present and chose to move items 9 (Feedback on the Appalachian Trail Corridor) and 10 (discussion of Burton Woods Road) to the front of the agenda.
2. *Comments from those present*—These comments occurred as the meeting closed. A trail user from Hanover recommended that trail blazes be visible each from the preceding and that a different color from blue to aid those with vision impairments. Thanks were rendered by Bernie Waugh for the work of the Norwich Trails volunteers and by George Clark to Flanders and the Norwich Historical Society (NHS) for arranging future meetings in the NHS facility.

Trail infrastructure

Items 9 and 10 were brought forward out of the regular order:

9. *Feedback on Appalachian Trail Corridor*—Krembs noted that there had been correspondence critical of the US Forest Service (USFS) [proposal](#) to designate three trails within the Appalachian Trail (AT) corridor in Norwich. He invited Doug Hardy to give historical background on the question of allowing trails within the corridor.

Hardy spoke, regarding the establishment of the AT corridor, the presence of unofficial trails within the corridor, the USFS efforts to minimize those trails, and the NTC efforts to gain recognition for certain trails. Krembs and Flanders noted that, after discussions with the USFS, the NTC sought recognition of five trails, but that only three had been proposed for official designation by the USFS.

Elliot Fisher spoke to a petition that he helped circulate, signed by 51 Norwich residents, seeking a pause in designation of trails, until further consideration could be given to some unofficial trails that the USFS designated for closure in its proposal. Hardy and John Wiggin

reported that the USFS appeared to be receptive to their ideas. Hardy and Flanders further reported that the Upper Valley Mountain Bike Association had withdrawn its support of the proposal because of a change in its membership structure.

After some discussion, it was agreed that the NTC would include in its comments on the USFS proposal support for two trail designations: Grigg Mountain and Dothan Brook. Layne **moved** and Williams **seconded** that the two would respond in writing to the USFS with an amended version of the draft response provided in the agenda, based on the discussion at this meeting, with a deadline of 10 July. **The motion carried.**

10. *Conversion of Burton Woods Road segment to a trail*—Krembs asked for input regarding the potential reclassification of Burton Woods Road to a trail. Flanders summarized the [proposed NTC memo](#) to the Norwich selectboard and explained the:

- Scope—reclassify from Bragg Hill Road to the crest of hill
- Purpose—to permit improved drainage of the right of way without suffering damage from motorized traffic
- Process—The statutory steps to notify and obtain feedback from parties affected by the potential reclassification

Fisken noted that the NTC received a letter opposed to making such a proposal to the selectboard from David and Patricia Derrick, whose family owns property on the other side of Griggs Mountain in an area not included in the reclassification proposal. In the letter, the Derricks opposed reclassification of class 4 roads on general principle.

Fisken spoke of the history of reclassifying four other class-4 roads in Norwich into trails to facilitate erosion control without detriment to the beneficial enjoyment of abutting properties; he read a justification that he had prepared in support of the measure.

After some discussion, Krembs deferred further consideration of a letter to the selectboard to the August meeting and asked members to read the current draft of the proposal to suggest improvements.

The regular order of the meeting resumed as time allowed.

3. *Reports on recent trail blockages and actions taken or planned*—Faughnan reported on clearing downed trees on the Upper Ballard Trail. Other topics were deferred for a future meeting.
4. *Scope of Lower-Ballard Trail work*—Krembs reported that the Upper Valley Trails Alliance will perform work on the Lower Ballard Trail in August. Other topics were deferred for a future meeting.
5. *Trail kiosks*—Discussion was deferred for a future meeting.
6. *Trail kiosk signage*—Discussion was deferred for a future meeting.
7. *Work days to schedule:*
 - a. July 18th—The work day was scheduled to address the stream crossing at the bottom of the “Grand Canyon” and mitigation of a perennially wet area nearby. Volunteers will assemble at the upper parking lot on Beaver Meadow Road at 8 am.
 - b. August 15th—The work day was identified to address improvements to the Lower Ballard Trail. Details will be announced in August.
8. *Planning scope of work on Lower Ballard Trail*—Discussion was deferred for a future meeting.
9. *Feedback on Appalachian Trail Corridor* (moved ahead of item 3)

10. *Conversion of Burton Woods Road segment to a trail (moved ahead of item 3)*
11. *Developing a trails master plan, as required by the 2020 Norwich Town Plan—Discussion was deferred for a future meeting.*

Financial

12. *Planning for FY 2022-23 budget: Parking—Discussion was deferred for a future meeting.*

Other

13. Items for August meeting
 - a. Schedule construction and installation of kiosks
 - b. Confirm signage for kiosks
 - c. Other items not discussed at this meeting
14. Items for future meetings
15. **Adjourn—Krembs adjourned the meeting at 8:30 pm**

Addendum: Memorandum to USFS, resulting from meeting

MEMORANDUM

TO: SETH A. COFFEY, SHAWN LANGSTON, CHRISTOPHER MATTRICK, USFS
FROM: NORWICH TRAILS COMMITTEE
SUBJECT: INPUT: APPALACHIAN TRAIL SIDE & CORRIDOR CROSSING TRAIL DESIGNATIONS
DATE: JULY 9, 2021
CC: NICK KREMBS, STEPHEN FLANDERS

1. *Summary* – The Norwich Trails Committee supports two of the three proposed Appalachian Trail side and corridor trail designations outlined in a June 2021 Small Projects Day memo on this topic. The committee, in consultation with its volunteers, requests further dialog on other trails in the corridor and offers some comments and recommendations on the proposed designations, below.
2. *Thank you* – We thank the involved USFS staff for being responsive to our proposal for designating certain trails within the corridor to be added to the NFS system.
3. *Concurrence on two trails* – At the July 7, 2021 meeting of the Norwich Trails Committee we established support from our volunteers and interested members of the public for the proposed designations of the **Griggs Mountain Trail** and the **Dothan Brook Trail**, as described.
4. *Joshua Trail* – We have received notice from the Upper Valley Mountain Bike Association that, due to structural change within their organization in the two years since the proposal was written, they no longer support the co-sponsored proposal (see Appendix). Therefore, we request no immediate action on this route, pending further community input and consultation with your office about how best to address the needs for multi-use crossing of the corridor within Norwich.
5. *Other trails* – We received notice from 51 Norwich residents in the form of a petition advocating for a “Modified Proposed Action from GMNF based on an alternative proposal, aligned with AT regulations yet better representing the Norwich trail community’s desires”. They have already submitted their petition and supporting documents to you directly via your request for public comment. Based on discussion at our 7 July 2021 meeting about this concern among our trail enthusiasts as well as representatives of the petition, we hope there can be further engagement between your office and the Norwich trail-using community to identify options that serve their interests while meeting the requirements of the Appalachian Trail Corridor.
6. *Trail relocation* – The proposal includes a brief relocation of the Dothan Brook Trail to be contained entirely within the AT corridor. It says, “This relocation...would be performed with hand tools. No trees over 3 inches would be cut.” We assume that the windfall present—much greater in diameter than three inches—would be cut with chainsaws.



Examples of windfall to be cleared to establish a relocation of the Dothan Brook Trail

7. *Five Points intersection* – We note the expectation of placing forest debris in the intersections of non-conforming trails. We wish to note some issues at the Five Points intersection.
 - In late fall and winter there is ATV traffic going north and south across that point, which would likely trample any natural barriers placed there. What would the USFS approach be, if this were to happen?
 - Unless there is a clear resolution of the apparent co-location of the corridor and Town Highway 51, we would be reluctant to place barriers across a town highway, leading to the north side of Five Points.
 - The other nearby trail north of Five Points, leading up Griggs Mountain, is a candidate for the use of forest debris or plantings as a barrier, recognizing that seasonal ATV traffic may not find such measures discouraging.
8. *Budgeting and execution* – We note the proposal to move an existing gate, provide a new barrier to motorized traffic and to provide signage. Would these measures be implemented through USFS funding and contracting procedures or is there an expectation of volunteer efforts from Norwich? What other actions might draw on our volunteer resources?
9. *Maintenance* – We understand that the Green Mountain Club coordinates trail adopters within the corridor. The Norwich Trails volunteers offer to adopt the Griggs Mountain and Dothan Brook Trails.

Appendix: Message from Upper Valley Mountain Bike Association

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Elizabeth Burdette <lizzyb20@hotmail.com>
Date: Wed, Jul 7, 2021 at 3:59 PM
Subject: UVMBA Involvement
To: norwichtrails@gmail.com <norwichtrails@gmail.com>
Cc: UVMBA <uvmountainbike@gmail.com>

Dear Norwich Trail Committee,

Since May of 2019 there has been significant change in membership on the Upper Valley Mountain Bike Association's Board of Directors. During that time the board has worked to define how we interact with the region's trail networks. We have developed a system to formalize these relationships called "Member Networks". As a Member Network the locals who know the trails best retain all trail decisions including maintenance and planning. Member Networks also gain access to the UVMBA's social media, grant writing support, tools, etc. In exchange the Member Networks promote club membership, have a liaison to the board and submit annual reports on their network.

We recently learned of the proposal sponsored by the Norwich Trails Committee and the UVMBA to Request to authorize four existing trails within the Appalachian Trail Corridor. Because the structure of how the club interacts with local networks has changed since the proposal was written, it would be inappropriate at this time for the club to continue to support this proposal as Norwich is not a Member Network. The board would be happy to talk about the benefits of becoming a Member Network if the Norwich Trails Committee is interested in learning more.

The purpose of this email is to officially withdraw the Upper Valley Mountain Bike Association's support of the above-mentioned proposal.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Thank you,

Liz Burdette

UVMBA President