

Minutes of the Norwich Trails Committee for July 3, 2019

Present: George Clark, Jim Faughnan, Bob Fiskens, Steve Flanders, Peter Griggs, Nick Krembs, Gerry Plummer, Peggy Schlein, John Wiggin

In cooperation with the Recreation Department, the Trails Committee held a work session on June 16 at Ballard Park at the lower end of the Ballard Trail. Members of the committee cut back vegetation and created rustic benches carved from tree trunks.

The next work session of the committee is to be on Sunday July 21 for improvement of drainage along the lower end of the Ballard Trail. Participants are to meet at 8:00 AM in the parking lot for the former town pool and should bring work gloves, drinking water, and insect/tick repellent.

Sean Ogle had earlier reported that the Upper Valley Trails Alliance (UVTA) would on Wednesday July 31 have a crew available to work on Norwich Trails. The committee enthusiastically welcomed this offer and determined that assistance from the crew would be most helpful at 3 or 4 locations along the Ballard Trail. Jim Faughnan volunteered to be the contact person with the UVTA and will before July 31 show the locations and work needed to a UVTA representative.

On Thursday August 1, representatives from the National Forest Service (NFS) and other organizations involved in regulating the Appalachian Trail Corridor (ATC) are to hold a site visit in Norwich. The goal of the site visit is to view trails recommended for sanctioned use in a proposal submitted by this committee and the Upper Valley Mountain Biking Association to the NFS. The site visit is to begin with a 20 minute public meeting at 9:00 am in Tracy Hall. Then approximately 12 individuals representing a half dozen organizations involved with the proposal are to spend several hours traveling, mainly on foot within the ATC, over a predetermined route to view those trails proposed for sanctioned use and also proposed associated parking areas. A report on the site visit is to be presented during the August 7th meeting of this committee.

John Wiggin and Peggy Schlein voiced concerns about specific trails and their uses in and near the ATC.

Steve Flanders had prepared a one-page document summarizing input from this committee concerning trails for the new Town Plan now being prepared. Nick Krembs is to submit that document to the Planning Commission.

On May 16 the committee held two public meetings about the proposed expansion of the Gile Mountain Parking lot. A summary of discussions at those meetings has been submitted to the Selectboard.

The committee is grateful for two recent grants received from the Norwich Women's Club. Additional funds will be needed for design of the site and proposed replacement bridge on Brown School House Road over Charles Brown Brook. Steve Flanders and Gerry Plummer have volunteered to work on a proposal for a state grant to help support that design work. This grant proposal is to be discussed further at the August 7 meeting of the committee. Obtaining a state

grant might be easier if the Class IV Brown School House Road were designated as a trail. Efforts are continuing to contact neighbors about their views on the possible change to a trail.

A counter installed at Parcel 5 should provide good estimate for summer use of that site.

Nick Krembs is to transmit a report on committee activities during the second quarter (April through June) to the Town Manager.

A concern of the committee has been crowding at peak times on the Gile Mountain Trail (GMT). The committee and others have been considering various means to alleviate this problem. It is hoped that continued and expanded communications with schools and other groups will lead to downgrading of the GMT as a destination. To help with the GMT issues, Steve Flanders prepared a one-page draft document to provide guidance for groups planning to use town trails. Additionally, he prepared a multipage draft document providing substantial details about relatively short hikes with rewarding views in numerous towns in the Upper Valley. Steve Flanders is to contact a UVTA representative to discuss ways to move forward with efforts to communicate effectively concerning the GMT with hikers from the Dartmouth community and elsewhere in the Upper Valley.

Respectfully submitted,
George Clark