



Trails Committee

Town of Hinesburg
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Meeting Minutes - October 16, 2019

- Approved 11/20/19 -

Present: Jane Sheldon, Chic McArthur, Lenore Budd, Peter Modley, George Dameron, Oren Guttman, Ray Mainer

Regrets: Nick Certo, Bret Golann

Guest: Pat Mainer, Town Forest Committee (TFC)

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

Lenore reported that she had received a compliment for the Trails Committee (TC) that the Russell Trails were in the best shape ever. Pat said that she thought the Eagle's Trail was looking well maintained as well. It's great that our hard work is not going unnoticed.

1. **Deer Hunting** – Pat Mainer attended to answer some questions the TC had about the deer hunting/recreation use policy changes the TFC is testing this year.
 - a. Pat acknowledged that it will be difficult to quantify what effect closing the trails to recreational use during peak hunting periods would have on reducing the deer population. The TFC had felt that the mission of maintaining a sustainable forest was such a priority that they had to try something. She explained that there was some confusion about the dates of closing vs. hunting, as well as the Safety Zone sign. She has been in touch with residents who questioned or complained and has addressed those issues.
 - b. Jane asked if any hunters had reported any kills in the HTF after the first closure dates. Pat said no, that the TFC is hoping to collect some numbers via word of mouth or Front Porch Forum (FPF) as there is no requirement for reporting where hunters killed their deer.
 - c. Lenore asked how this test season would be evaluated. Pat said that there were no formal studies being conducted to collect data on deer density to measure changes by, and that any effect would only be seen over time, e.g. if browsing of tree shoots was reduced. Jane mentioned that she had seen indications of reduced recreational use. When restocking maps at the two Hayden Hill Trailheads, she noticed bicyclists' cars turning around in the parking lots and that over the four days (Friday-Monday) of the

long holiday weekend almost no maps had been taken. Normally with good weather the holders would be nearly empty in that time period.

- d. Lenore asked if there had been any discussion among the Agency of Natural Resource (ANR) groups about antlerless deer hunting with rifles. Pat said that Ethan Tapper (County Forester) had alluded to that possibility but not for this year.
- e. Peter asked if deer management plans were similar in those acres adjacent to HTF. Oren wondered if browsing was a problem in areas, such as the Fred Johnson Wildlife area, where there is no recreation. Pat was not familiar with either of these other area's information.
- f. Peter asked if there was any way we could get the word out that it was important for hunters to let us know their results in the HTF. Pat said she'd emphasize that in her future FPF postings.
- g. Peter mentioned that coyotes solved a problem on his land in CT as they are able to kill the fawns. Pat said that there are coyotes in the HTF now, but apparently are not making an impact in the growth of the population.
- h. Pat also mentioned that there will be four deer prevention fencing areas in the LaPlatte Headwaters Town Forest (LHTF) to compare browsing outside versus none inside.

- 2. **Minutes** – George made a motion to accept the minutes, Ray seconded and the motion was passed unanimously.
- 3. **Budget** – Recent purchases from Curtis Lumber for puncheons and VYCC work on the Class IV portion of LaVigne Hill have reduced the amount of funds available for TC use to \$106.71. The TC must ask for the next fiscal year's (2020/21) budget soon. Jane suggested that we ask for an increase from \$750 to \$1000 in light of upcoming bridge building projects. Lenore will include that in her request.
- 4. **Conservation Commission (CC) Meeting** – Lenore and George recently attended the CC meeting to discuss mowing and dog usage in Geprags Park. Currently the CC is contracting mowing twice a year. After some discussion it was agreed that the CC would request an additional \$500 in next year's budget to allow for mowing three times a season. Lenore will send a trail map to Wahl Landscaping, who does the mowing. George reported that the Hill Spur Trail has been designated as dog-free, but that signs to that effect have not been put up. Lenore will contact the CC to offer to print and laminate temporary signs until permanent ones can be produced.
- 5. **Russell Trails** – Ray has added more puncheon along the stretch from the kiosk to the bridge. This work raises that entire length off the ground. Lenore reported that Tom Carlson asked whether the TC would adopt a new trail between Thistle Hill and the Russell Perimeter Trail. This is a social trail that is popular with Thistle Hill residents. It would be named "Paul's Trail" in honor of a Thistle Hill resident who died last year. Tom will seek formal permission from the TH

homeowner's association and Lenore will seek permission from James Donegan and Greg Cluver, the two other affected landowners.

6. Task List –

- a. Baldwin Road** – Lenore will try to do some flagging this weekend. We'd hoped to start trail building this fall on the Carse land along Baldwin Road.
- b. CVU Trails** – Ray spoke to the CVU cross country coach regarding putting the trails behind the school on the HART map in order to continue our efforts to connect the various trails and dirt roads in town. The coach had no problem with it, and Ray will talk to the principal to get permission to put up HART blazes.
- c. Gilman Road Sign** – Ray reported that one side of the sign at the entrance to the parking lot is blank. Turning it so it could be read by oncoming traffic would leave one direction with no info at all. Lenore suggested putting up the brown hiker signs at the road to better highlight the entrance, and leaving the sign facing outward. Ray will work with Mike Anthony to get this project finished.
- d. Maps at Kiosks** – Ray replaced the fading maps at all three HTF trailhead kiosks. We are waiting for the Russell Trail map to get printed and it will be replaced when ready.
- e. Mill Street Historical Walk** – George suggested that he and Peter find a date to scout the area, now that the vegetation is dying off and the mill ruins can be found again, to evaluate the viability of this project.

7. Budget for 2020 – Lenore asked us to think about any projects for which we would need funds in the 2020/2021 fiscal year. Oren pointed out that we will need to build a bridge opposite the Halsmer house on the Carse easement. Jane pointed out that we've used up most of our \$750 budget in the first four months of the current fiscal year which would justify asking for asking for additional funding in 20/21. Lenore will ask for \$1000 for Halsmer bridge

8. Record Articles – Lenore has submitted the article for October and Oren is writing the one for November. There is no paper issued in December.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, November 20, 2019.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jane Sheldon, Secretary