



TOWN OF ELLINGTON

Ad Hoc Ellington Trails Committee

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TOM PALSHAW
DAN CHAMBERLIN
ROBERT BARONE
ANN HARFORD

Ad Hoc Ellington Trails Committee
Regular Meeting Minutes
February 7, 2024
Town Hall Annex

MEMBERS PRESENT: Donna Allen, Judi Manfre, Linda Anderson, Tom Palshaw, Dan Chamberlin, Robert Barone, Lindsay Neubecker, Deanna Wambolt-Gulick

MEMBERS ABSENT: Cynthia van Zelm, Valerie Amsel, Ann Harford, Larrissa Burke, Bill Schultz

I. Call to Order

Ms. Anderson called the meeting to order at 6:32 pm.

II. Citizens' Forum: No discussion was held.

III. Approval of Minutes

A. December 6, 2023

MOVED (PALSHAW), SECONDED (ALLEN) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE DECEMBER 6, 2023 MEETING.

IV. Old Business

A. Hockanum River Crew Report

Mr. Barone shared that work is going on to replace a bridge, raising it up; concern was expressed that many trees are starting to fall victim to erosion. Mr. Barone commented that some downed trees need removal across different areas of the trail. Mr. Palshaw added that the bridge leads to a dead end, so it isn't critical that it be raised further.

1. Boardwalk – Wetlands – 2/12/2024

Ms. Anderson shared that the Inland Wetlands Agency will discuss the proposal for the boardwalk bridge at their next meeting.

2. Tree Removed Near Swing Bridge

The Town has removed the downed tree that had been blocking the swing bridge.

B. Conservation Commission Report

Ms. Anderson shared that there were a couple of properties up for sale, but there is no current activity that directly relates to the work of the Committee.

C. Grants for Kiosks

Ms. Anderson shared that the grant was approved by the Town, in an amount of \$9,950. Ms. Amsel has gotten three quotes for the project, and TimberHomes of Vermont has come in the lowest so far. Once

the grant funds come through, members of the Committee will get the kits and work on installation; Boy Scouts may be available to help with set-up during the summer.

D. New Emergency Signs

Mr. Palshaw shared that the signs are a bit more complicated than initially planned, with the addition of more information/characters. He suggested that the signs be oriented vertically to improve the longevity of the signs, and he suggested that the emergency sign located by blazed yellow at eye level, done consistently through all trails.

Ms. Anderson noted that all maps will need to be adjusted to indicate that yellow blaze means emergency signage. Ms. Allen asked if it is easier or better to post reflective tape or dayglow instead of a yellow blaze, as it would be more attention-grabbing at night. Ms. Anderson echoed the importance of ensuring visibility at night. It was suggested that a reflector be placed at the emergency sign locations to aid in visibility. Discussion was held on the potential increase in cost when adding signs, reflectors, and updating kiosks; this is something that the Committee will need to explore further.

Ms. Palshaw is giving a talk on February 21 at 7:00 pm at the Ambulance Building to emergency service personnel concerning the emergency signage; he said that anyone interested is welcome to come and learn. He is planning to explain the system, show the overall trail map, cover specific trails, and explain what conditions to expect if an emergency extraction was required. He plans to encourage the emergency departments to consider conducting training pertaining to the trails.

Mr. Palshaw also discussed potential materials for the signage, balancing cost and durability of the signs.

E. Meeting Schedule 2024

The May meeting will be held in the Town Hall due to a scheduling conflict with the Annex.

F. Crystal Ridge – New Map/Road Sign

Ms. Anderson shared that the map should be ready for review by the next meeting; she received the first draft, and there are things that still need to be changed, as the drafting process is ongoing. The Committee will also need to work on writing a description for the trail. Mr. Palshaw requested a copy of the draft, which Ms. Anderson will send to him.

Ms. Harford had previously suggested adding a street sign for the trail, which has been approved at Public Works. Ms. Anderson thinks that it will say *Crystal Ridge Trail* with an arrow marking the entrance of the trail, printed on both sides. Ms. Allen expressed concern that a green sign with that printing by the Crystal Ridge Road sign could be confusing; the Committee will explore other color options to alleviate this confusion.

G. Road Signs for Kimball

Ms. Anderson shared that the Committee is looking to get similar street signage for the Kimball Trail as well.

H. Easements for West Road

Ms. Anderson shared that this is being explored, though there is a question of whether the Town Attorney needs to be involved in the process, which could become costly very quickly. There are not many properties involved, so it could be a quick process, but there are no guarantees.

Mr. Palshaw questioned if there might be some town development plans on a relevant property; Ms. Anderson suggested that the Committee continue to pursue easements but warned that the situation may develop differently depending on how receptive the property owners are.

I. CT Trail Finder

Ms. Anderson has reached out to see if the Ellington Trails can be listed on the site; currently the answer is no because of certain regulations required by CT Trail Finder, but the Committee was encouraged to circle back at a later date.

V. New Business

A. Lindsay – Trails and Beautification

The Scouts are looking to install bluebird houses and are looking to the Committee for guidance. A question was raised on expanding the Trails Committee to a “Trails and Beautification Committee” to work on beautification of trails and the community. Ms. Anderson shared that there is already an Ellington Beautification Committee, and suggested reaching out to Julia Connor in the Administration Office to see how to get involved. Ms. Anderson expressed that the Committee is currently pretty busy, so exploring beautification would be a better option for interested individuals.

B. Bluebird Houses from Somers Boy Scouts

Ms. Anderson shared that Batz and Ellington Highlands would be ideal locations for these houses, though she is wary of accepting the boxes if the Town insists on mowing around the boxes. With bluebird boxes, there needs to be a space around the boxes that remains meadow-like to make it more pollinator- and bird-friendly. Mr. Anderson recommended putting this on hold for now until the mowing is further discussed/decided.

C. Ellington Youth Services

1. Vape Disposal Containers

Ms. Anderson met with Youth Services staff, who are looking to get more involved with the Trails Committee. One thing that Youth Services is looking to do is to get recycling containers installed at the trails to help protect the trails from the potential dangers of vape batteries. They are currently working to find a company that specializes in this area.

Ms. Allen asked who would be responsible for maintaining these containers. Ms. Anderson stated that it would be up to the recycling center. All parties have been contacted and are willing to participate, though this is still very much in its beginning stages.

2. Bring a Buddy/Neighbor Walk for National Public Health Week – Sunday, April 7th

This will be held at either Batz or Windermere, due to parking needs. Ms. Anderson suggested that letterboxing may be a good thing to include. She also suggested that the Amphitheater be used for some of the Committee’s summer programming.

D. Wildflower Field and Mowing at Batz

The Committee is looking to create a wildflower field.

E. Deanna – Ellington Congregational Church Outreach

Ms. Wambolt-Gulick was contacted regarding sharing information on the Trails Committee at the Ellington Congregational Church on February 23 at 7:00 pm. They are looking for information about where to access maps, what trails are offered, and what projects and happenings are going on.

Ms. Wambolt-Gulick and Ms. Allen will attend to share information and Ms. Anderson will provide maps to hand out.

VI. Subcommittee Reports

A. Treasurer

1. Budget Submitted

Ms. Anderson reviewed the budget, noting that different items were dropped based on use over the previous year.

B. Maintenance

1. Kimball's Bridges

Ms. Amsel checked the bridges and noted that they are all in good shape.

2. Clean-Up Day (first or second Saturday of April – Trails Committee/Boy Scouts/Girl Scouts/High School Group)

Ms. Anderson shared that she is working on determining a date where interested parties are available to work on trail cleanup.

3. Kiosk Installments – Help from Boy Scouts

Ms. Anderson shared that Boy Scouts are interested in helping with the project. She suggested that a high school group may be willing to help as well.

C. Community Outreach

1. Ginny Apple Talks

a. Squirrels

The talk was popular, with 25 people in attendance. Ms. Anderson passed along some of the interesting facts that were shared at the talk.

b. Reptiles and Amphibians – February 27th

This event is upcoming.

c. Minks, Muskrats, Beavers, and Otters – March 26th

This event is upcoming.

2. Earth Day – Table, Mulch at Batz

The Committee is looking for volunteers to work the table at the Earth Day event. Ms. Anderson is also looking to see if other groups (Girl Scouts, Green Earth Group, etc.) are willing to help, as well as checking to see if other groups are willing to help spread mulch at Batz.

Ms. Anderson suggested setting up a photo board for the table, showcasing the Committee's support and work.

3. Bird Walk at Batz – May 4th (rain date May 11th)

This event is upcoming, and the date has been shifted to May 11, rain date May 12th, due to availability.

4. CT Trails Day – June 1st and 2nd

The date will be determined as the event gets closer. Ms. Anderson suggested hiking Windermere, as she doesn't recall that being utilized for past events. Ms. Anderson will also be looking for volunteers to assist with this event.

VII. Adjournment

MOVED (MANFRE), SECONDED (ALLEN) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO ADJOURN THE TRAILS COMMITTEE MEETING AT 7:42 PM.

Prepared by Deanna Wambolt-Gulick; submitted by

Julia Connor

