



# Town of Merrimack, New Hampshire

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Planning - Zoning - Economic Development - Conservation

## **HORSE HILL NATURE PRESERVE SUBCOMMITTEE OF MERRIMACK CONSERVATION COMMISSION FEBRUARY 7, 2023 MEETING MINUTES**

Call to order: Meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Mr. Gagnon.

Members present:

Marc Gagnon, Chair  
Ellen Kolb, MCC Representative  
Paul Lavoie  
Lynne Wenz  
Tim Adams (alternate)

Members absent:

Christine Nazaka

Mr. Gagnon asked Mr. Adams to participate as full voting member.

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### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The minutes of the November 29, 2022 subcommittee meeting were approved 4-0-0 by all members present without any changes.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

#### **Recap of winter activities:**

Mr. Gagnon and Mr. Lavoie worked with members of New England Mountain Bike Association (NEMBA) on major regrading work on Twister Trail, moving rocks and resetting the bridge to allow for safer bike, hike and ski traffic. NEMBA also did some trail grading on Blodgett Hill Bypass.

Mr. Gagnon has put up several map holders made from leftover materials from the kiosk repair project. These were placed at several key junction points along the Loop Trail to help unfamiliar hikers confirm their location.

Mr. Gagnon has received the post setting materials, however the winter season has paused this repair work. The posts will be re-set in the coming spring.

Mr. Lavoie reported that NEMBA did some trail grooming with the Snow Dog on Loop Trail. Permission has not been received to groom at Fields Farm.

The unusual winter season of freezing and thawing with heavy rains has created some difficult trail conditions, with many previously dry areas now flooding and eroding. Some temporary mitigation is being done as weather allows. (See below for further discussion.)

**Spaulding Foundation:** Ms. Wenz reported that the Historical Society has previously endorsed the continued cleanup and upkeep of the foundation, and there is no concern in us moving forward with this effort. The committee agreed to schedule a work day in the early spring to perform this work, as part of our on-going invasive species follow-up work.

Mr. Gagnon will work to get this scheduled, with communication via email.

**Signage improvements:** Mr. Gagnon reported that HHNP was the major respondent to a request and offer by MCC to have needed trail signs created by a local artisan. Mr. Gagnon submitted a list of approximately a dozen needed signs. These include signs for existing trails that never had signs (i.e. Plumber, Fat Cat), new trails (Long Pond View), and replacement of older outdated signs (Ledges). We are waiting for an update for when to expect these to be completed. Installation will be scheduled as soon as they are received.

**Urgent Trail Maintenance Issues:**

Mr. Gagnon reported on several emerging trail issues due to current conditions. There are three major areas of concern as follows:

1. **“Watson Bridge” Area.** The beaver activity that widened the upstream dam has resulted in overflow that periodically washes down the trail and now over the west side bridge foundation. This will eventually compromise the bridge stability if not addressed immediately. This will require some upstream water diverting, trenching, dam modifications, etc. to remediate. **The committee asks for MCC guidance on dealing with the Beaver issue. Ms. Kolb will bring this to the MCC attention and advise next steps.**
2. **Loop Trail at Post 9/Kiosk.** This area has seen the seasonal flooding worsen and expand in size. There is no low area surrounding the trail that water can be diverted to. Mr. Gagnon recommends creating a bypass towards the north side ridge where the land is slightly elevated. There are some rough pathways through that area now as hikers are seeking a walk around. No large trees or significant grading are likely needed. **Mr. Gagnon will scope out a bypass route and flag for future implementation.**
3. **Loop Trail North from Palmeri Drive.** This is a known problem area that has been addressed before, but now has worsened. The previous drain channels need to be re-opened and the walk path may need to be elevated in several areas. Mr. Gagnon will begin mitigation as possible, and develop an improvement option for the spring.

**MCC Update (Ms. Kolb attending)**

**Fields Farm next steps:** No update as the town staff is still working on legal property issues. No firm plan as to when they may re-engage the HHNP team on this.

**NRPC Mapping:** No update.

**HHNP 20th Anniversary.** No specific plans being discussed at this time. (May 8, 2023 will mark twenty years since the Town Council formally voted to name our property the Horse Hill Nature Preserve.)

Ms. Kolb was asked to remind MCC to ask the Town to re-grade the access road to Old Kings Road parking at HHNP. No update. It was noted that the town had brought in equipment recently, then removed it without completing the work.

### **OTHER BUSINESS**

#### **Kiosk Refresh.**

Ms. Wenz took an action item to review the kiosk contents and report on recommended improvements and updates.

#### **Wildlife viewing station**

Ms. Wenz took an action item to bring in photos of the proposed viewing station for White Pine Swamp that could be a potential Scout Project.

#### **Mountain Bike Connector Trail**

Mr. Lavoie noted that the Master Plan envisioned a separation of Bike trails and walking trails as a potential improvement. He has noted that NEMBA is interested in opening a connector trail between Ledges and Twister that would help work toward this approach. He will work with NEMBA to bring a proposal forward at a later date TBD.

**Meeting calendar for 2023: subcommittee consensus is to change next meeting to 5/30 (from previous 5/23). Other remaining dates are September 12, and November 28, 2023.**

### **ADJOURNMENT**

**On a motion by Mr. Adams and seconded by Ms. Wenz, the meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m., vote 4-0-0.**