



## Town of Merrimack, New Hampshire

Community Development Department

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Planning - Zoning - Economic Development - Conservation

### SPECIAL MERRIMACK CONSERVATION COMMISSION MAY 19, 2020 **MEETING MINUTES**

A special meeting of the Merrimack Conservation Commission was held on Tuesday, May 19, 2020 at 6:35 p.m.

Steve Perkins, Vice Chair, Presided

Members of the Commission Participating: Gina Rosati, Secretary  
Michael Boisvert  
Cynthia Glenn  
Gage Perry  
Eric Starr, Alternate Member  
Michael Swisher, Alternate Member  
Tim Tenhave, Alternate Member  
Councilor Peter Albert (participation began at 6:50 p.m.)

Members of the Commission Absent: Matt Caron, Chair

Also Participating: Denise Roy, Chief, Merrimack Police Department  
Kyle Fox, Director, Public Works Department

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Due to the COVID-19/Coronavirus crisis, and in accordance with [Governor Sununu's Emergency Order #12](#) pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04, this Commission is authorized to meet electronically.

Vice Chair Perkins noted, as stated on the agenda, the meeting was being aired live on Merrimack TV and the Merrimack TV Facebook Live page (<http://www.facebook.com/merrimacktv>). Telephone access was available for members of the public wishing to provide comment; 1-312-626-6799 US / 1-929-205-6099 US (Meeting ID: 931 1799 3783).

Also identified on the agenda was the opportunity for public comment to be submitted leading up to the start of the meeting via email to: [ConservationCommission@MerrimackNH.Gov](mailto:ConservationCommission@MerrimackNH.Gov). (copies attached).

Commissioners were participating via Zoom. In accordance with [RSA 91-A:2 III](#), each member of the Commission was asked to state, for the record, where they were, why their attendance in person was not reasonably practical, who, if anyone, was with them, and whether or not they were able to hear the proceedings.

Vice Chair Perkins

Stated he was participating electronically from home, attendance in person was not reasonably practical due to COVID-19, he was alone in the room he was in, and could hear the proceedings.

Commissioner Rosati

Stated she was participating electronically from home, attendance in person was not reasonably practical due to COVID-19, she was alone in the room she was in, and could hear the proceedings.

Commissioner Swisher

Stated he was participating electronically from home, attendance in person was not reasonably practical due to COVID-19, he was alone in the room he was in, and could hear the proceedings.

Commissioner Glenn

Stated she was participating electronically from home, attendance in person was not reasonably practical due to COVID-19, she was alone in the room she was in, and could hear the proceedings.

Commissioner Perry

Stated he was participating electronically from home, attendance in person was not reasonably practical due to COVID-19, he was home with his family, and could hear the proceedings.

Commissioner Starr

Stated he was participating electronically from home, attendance in person was not reasonably practical due to COVID-19, he was alone in the room he was in, and could hear the proceedings.

Commissioner Boisvert

Stated he was participating electronically from home, attendance in person was not reasonably practical due to COVID-19, he was alone in the room he was in, and could hear the proceedings.

Commissioner Tenhave

Stated he was participating electronically from home, attendance in person was not reasonably practical due to COVID-19, he was home with family although alone in the room he was in, and could hear the proceedings.

It was acknowledged all members participating electronically could be heard. The Commission was reminded all votes would be taken by Roll Call.

*Vice Chair Perkins designated Eric Starr to sit in for Matt Caron and Michael Swisher for Councilor Albert.*

**NEW BUSINESS**

- 1. Parking at Wildcat Falls** - Commission to discuss parking issues and overflow parking into the surrounding Currier Road neighborhood, as directed by the Town Council. The Commission is inviting public comment limited to this specific agenda item.

The Commission, along with the Highway Safety Committee, was asked by the Town Council to provide feedback on the parking concern at both Wildcat Falls and the Horse Hill Nature Preserve (HHNP). The Commission manages both parcels; however, its jurisdiction does not extend beyond the entrance of the parking lot.

Vice Chair Perkins commented on the belief a good deal of the discussion may be centered around on-street parking, the hope the discussion would be used to catalyze those areas that are within the jurisdiction of the Commission to address, and that the result would be the development of alternatives and a recommendation that can be forwarded to the Town Council.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

A short video provided to the Commission by Amy Simoneau, 6 Fir Street, was shared (<https://youtu.be/Im41OuANoX8>).

Amy Simoneau, 6 Fir Street

Moved to the area looking for a quaint neighborhood with minimum traffic on a dead-end street. She spoke of the increase in traffic overflow at Wildcat Falls over the past 3 years. Having talked with others in the area, she has learned this has been occurring since well before 2011 when the parking lot was expanded. She is hopeful a good solution can be reached so that the area will be safe, and the wetlands protected.

Commissioner Perry noted the role of the Commission is advisory, and any decisions reached would be forwarded to the Town Council as recommendations.

Andrew Duane, Recording Secretary, Wildcat Falls Sub-committee

Commented during the few times he has been in the area over the past few weeks, he has witnessed significant overflow on the street; many cars with out-of-state plates. The sub-committee has been aware of the parking limitations for some time, and previously considered options for expansion.

The immediate concern is the increased traffic due to the COVID-19 stay-at-home restrictions. The current situation is viewed as a worst-case scenario. However, over the past several years, on a nice weekend in peak summer, the same situation has been seen; parking lot full and vehicles parked on Currier Road.

The current lot has a capacity of approx. 15 cars. Although previously signed as no parking, with the unapproved removal of the signs, there is room for about 6 additional vehicles parked along the left-hand side. The sub-committee considered utilizing other Town properties such as the parking lot at the high school as overflow parking for Wildcat Falls. It is believed that could be a good long-term solution for the summer months as well. Such an action would have to be coordinated with the School Board and Town Council.

The Wildcat Falls trails, through the Town Center trail extension, connect with the high school parking lot. It is believed utilizing the high school lot would be one of the best short-term options for increasing the parking capability, and that it should be coupled with signage at the park entrance and perhaps also at the

kiosk (strenuously suggesting people not park on the street and identifying where the overflow parking is as well as other Town parks). It could also be announced on social media and a map kiosk could be erected at the alternate trail entrance to help people navigate back into the rest of the park.

For the long-term, there are parking lot expansion possibilities. A few simple expansions could provide 5-10 additional spaces and more aggressive approaches could result in 15, 20, or 30 additional spaces. Because of the neighborhood Wildcat Falls is in, perhaps such a large expansion is not feasible, and what should be looked at is limiting traffic to the area.

Paul Marone, 29 Currier Road

Has resided here for 4 years. The fact that it is a quiet, dead-end neighborhood is one of the reasons his family purchased the property. He has seen an increase in traffic each year. He spoke of the concerns voiced regarding high traffic, speeding, parking, trash, and influx of people from out of state. Having reviewed some of the security footage from his residence (12 houses before the entrance to Wildcat Falls), on Sunday between 2:00 - 3:00 p.m. he counted 147 vehicles driving by his home and 93 vehicles between 11:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

On an average Sunday when traffic starts as early as 9:00 a.m. and can continue through 7:00 p.m., given the numbers seen, if you average it and bring it to around 120 cars and lower the 9-10 hours of volume to 6 hours, you come out with 720 cars driving by in a 6-hour period. If you consider the number of people in each vehicle and average that to 3, you end up with 2,150 people coming into Wildcat Falls from this entrance, which is a lot of traffic for a dead-end street with 12 houses on it.

Mr. Marone commented on being thankful for the efforts of the Police Department with regard to patrols, no parking signage (one side of road), response to emails, etc.

He believes everyone in the neighborhood would agree that expansion of the parking lot might alleviate some of the on-street parking, but it would not lower the volume of people coming into the neighborhood. He does not believe that would be helpful. He is in favor of utilizing an alternate overflow parking location as a long-term solution. As an immediate solution, he would not be disappointed to see the lot temporarily closed until a solution can be identified.

Heidi Marr, 17 Currier Road

She has resided here since 1997. The immediate measures that have been taken to stop the flow of traffic have been wonderful. She spoke of the high speed of traffic on the street. Another issue is the trash that is being left behind. She believes overflow traffic at the high school is a viable option, and perhaps could be a permanent entrance, particularly on weekends.

Councilor Albert

Stated he was participating electronically from home, attendance in person was not reasonably practical due to COVID-19, he was home with his family, but alone in the room he was in, and could hear the proceedings.

He was told residents in the Currier Road neighborhood were taking the temporary no parking signs down.

Heidi Marr, 17 Currier Road

Responded she is uncertain if the residents were the ones removing the signage; however, most of the signs seem to have stayed up. She believes most of the residents have no issue with the signage. It has definitely stopped some of the traffic.

Commissioner Rosati commented the situation at Wildcat Falls is not new or the result of COVID-19. Amy Simoneau sent an email to the MerrimackOutdoors address back on September 23, 2019 addressing trash and dog waste that was left on the trails. Commissioner Rosati spoke of an email she received from Grace Wilson, 35 Currier Road, and of further communications with Ms. Wilson. Ms. Wilson is unable to call in, but did submit public comment, and has asked that it be read into the record:

*“My mom and I live in the house on the corner right next to the entrance to the parking lot at the falls. My mom has lived here for 55 years, and I have lived here 50 years. We have never had any issues living on the land adjacent to the falls until the Town purchased it, put the parking lot in, and publicized its location.*

*We and the neighbors fought against the lot going in, but were not listened to. Our concerns of more traffic, partying, drugs, drinking, and vandalism has come to pass and has made our neighborhood unsafe and has brought us to this moment.*

*We didn't realize the Town was going to publicize the parks' whereabouts in travel magazines and the L.L. Bean catalog and YouTube. We would have fought against that as well, and we could have told the Town it was not in the best interest of the Town or neighborhood or the park to do this.*

*It has created a mess, and has become disruptive to our way of life. We have counted over 150 cars on the recent Saturdays and Sundays. Cars, people, animals all day long. We even had a tour bus from Canada drop over 75 people off last year, and the bus idled for over an hour before it finally moved. The neighborhood called the police and we were told, "it's a nice day and a holiday, don't worry about it". That was the end to our neighborhood safety and homey feel.*

*Addition to the heavy traffic, cars are blocking our driveways and mailboxes and the only fire hydrant, people are throwing trash and allowing their pets to defecate on our lawns. The street is so crowded with cars that people and their dogs are walking on all the lawns to get to the entrance to the falls trespassing on our property. They hang out on our lawns playing loud music and talking loudly and just being rude to the people who live in the homes. We even had sunbathers on our lawn with their car stereo playing and them laying on our lawn in swimsuits, they didn't care they were trespassing.*

*The cars are parked one on top of the other in front of our homes. A lot of us have sprinkler systems and the tops get broken off due to being driven over when cars park on our lawns. Each time there is a cost to us to repair our sprinkler systems.*

*The increased traffic has taken away our safe neighborhood so children can no longer ride bikes or play or walk their dogs. People cannot walk down the street due to the amount of cars and the speeds they are traveling at. Our posted 20 mph speed limit sign went missing.*

*Cars attempting 2 way traffic when cars are parked in front on one side of the street creates gridlock. Cars are parked on the right-hand side often blocking the fire hydrant, creates dangerous conditions for emergency vehicles to get down the street, park and stage rescue and recovery. They normally park in front of our house, and this won't happen if the cars are allowed to continue to park at the lower circle of*

*Currier Road. Cars will have to be towed and precious time would be lost for a rescue or putting out a fire.*

*The Town has another access point to Wildcat falls near Merrimack High School, and there is ample parking at the other entrance. The repairs to the footbridge should be a top priority and the Currier Road access should be used for local and foot traffic only. There is no reason why the Currier Road neighborhood families' lives should be disrupted with another access point available to the Town and visitors.*

*While the bridge is being repaired, I am asking that no parking signs be placed on the entire lower circle of Currier Road. You have placed them on the left-hand side, but no one was parking on the left-hand side to begin with, they are parking on the right-hand side. We need the right side around the lower circle no parking as well.*

*My personal story ties into what is going on with the amount of traffic and people parking on our lawn and in front of our home on Currier Road.*

*I have PTSD, Panic Disorder and Anxiety Disorder along with 2 different brain injuries I received in a car accident. What people don't understand about PTSD is it comes on suddenly by being triggered. Mine is triggered by the opening and closing of car doors and trunks slamming, the locking of cars with the beeping and the car alarms going off. My brain injuries make me need a quiet lifestyle without a lot of crowds or activity. It's why I live at home and not in the city. My home on Currier road has always been my safe haven. Wildcat Falls has always been my place of calm and tranquility, but I don't feel safe anymore.*

*My PTSD is triggered, and my panic and anxiety attacks are amplified. Add a lot of strangers walking in front of my home, and I don't feel safe. I don't feel safe in a home I have lived in for 50 years. The woods that gave me solace, now give me fear. I live in a constant state of panic and anxiety to the point where I don't go outside in my front yard very often anymore. My bedroom faces the street. I have had to move my bed as far from the windows as possible. I don't open my windows or my shades anymore because every time I look out I see strangers out front, and it sets off my conditions. I shouldn't have to live like this. I shouldn't be afraid in my own home or out in my yard, in my neighborhood or down the trails I know like a second skin. My whole way of life has been affected by the amount of cars and strangers in front of my home.*

*Having no parking on the lower circle, especially in front of our home, would help on so many levels. It would allow our children to ride their bikes, play, and walk their dogs. It would allow traffic to flow easier to and from the lot. It would allow emergency vehicles a place to stage and rescue. And lastly, it would personally assist me and calm my PTSD episodes, my anxiety disorder, and panic attacks so I could function more normally on a daily basis. I would feel safer in my home and outside in my yard. Our neighbors should be able to have their children play and ride their bikes and dogs should be walked without the fear of being hit by people speeding down the road. This is an older neighborhood. Most of us have lived here over 40 years. Help us re-establish the safety of our neighborhood and open the access point near the high school. Close parking on Currier Road for people heading to the falls. Thank you*

*Grace Fairbairn Wilson  
35 Currier Road"*

Paul Marone, 29 Currier Road



Stated there are many in the neighborhood that have a good deal to say, but may not feel comfortable voicing their concerns in this type of setting. He has spoken with nearly every resident in the neighborhood, and everyone is on the same page. He is aware there are a few residents further up towards Baboosic that might not see the volume as easily because they are a little further removed and may have had some questions about signage. However, he has personally witnessed, on numerous occasions, people parking at the Falls taking signage down, throwing it in the woods, and parking. He has gone out himself, almost on a daily basis, to retrieve the signs and put them back up.

A lot of people in the neighborhood are in support of resident parking only on the street as a solution with the idea that if the parking lot is full people will eventually find the other entrances. He suggested there could be resident/visitor parking passes and the ability to share driveways.

Commissioner Tenhave provided a presentation (can be viewed [here](#) (tape counter 47:48)).

On April 23, 2020, the Town Council made the request of the Highway Safety Committee and the Conservation Commission to review the situation with the traffic overflow in the neighborhoods surrounding the entrances to Wildcat Falls, Grater Woods, and HHNP, and report back to the Town Council.

Displayed was a photo of the traffic situation as viewed on Saturday, April 25, 2020 (11:25 a.m.); all spots were filled, cars parallel parked where there were signs (2012) to disallow that, cars along Hemlock at this time, police officer on bike patrol outside of camera view interacting with the public, and more cars coming and attempting to park. Asked if he was aware of when the no parking signs were removed, Commissioner Tenhave stated his belief that occurred within the first few years after the parking lot was expanded. Commissioner Perry stated the purpose for disallowing parallel parking along that side was to allow access to emergency vehicles when the lot is full. Commissioner Tenhave commented an additional reason was the close proximity to the wetland.

The presentation covered potential options for consideration:

Near term (1-6 months)

- reset the current lot for more/less spaces
- close the current lot or other restrictions
- additional parking (or not) utilizing the streets in the neighborhood
- do nothing or anything else

Councilor Albert questioned increasing the size of the parking lot. The suggestion of closing the lot for the time being concerns him as he believes it would increase the amount of on-street parking.

Commissioner Rosati stated her opposition to expansion of the lot. Although the sub-committee had brought that discussion before the Commission last year, after speaking with some of the neighbors, she now feels expansion would increase the amount of traffic, and would not address spillover onto the street. She would prefer to close it, and allow the situation to calm. After speaking with the School Board, she is aware they are interested in working with the Commission to allow for overflow traffic to go to the high school lot.

She spoke of the level of publicity. In the most current L.L. Bean catalogue, Wildcat Falls is listed as a hidden place people should visit.

Commissioner Perry stated agreement the lot should not be expanded further. That was an approach taken at the HHNP, and on a nice sunny day, there remain vehicles parked on the street. Unless there is an Ordinance enacted prohibiting on-street parking, it is legal. If there are people trespassing, it is an enforcement issue.

Commissioner Boisvert stated agreement commenting there is no easy solution. There is the need for parking enforcement. One of the residents mentioned the possibility of permitted street parking. He looked at the trail entrance by the high school, and does not believe it to be viable for the short term as it is difficult to locate the entrance to the trail. He would like to look into the high school parking lot as a long-term alternative. There is nothing the Commission can do about Wildcat Falls being on TripAdvisor and all over the internet. He does not believe that was done by the Town. Closing the lot off may cool things down, but he is uncertain he agrees with that approach.

Denise Roy, Chief, Merrimack Police Department, remarked there are 3 officers and a supervisor on the street during a pandemic. They get down to the area as much as possible. The situation is not only creating a problem for the residents, but for the department as well as they are taking people away from what they need to be doing to put them down there. She has pulled the reports for the past 10 years, as requested. To date this year, they have had 7 complaints at Wildcat Falls. If there is a problem, there is the need for residents to contact the department. She spoke of a call received over the weekend from an individual who indicated that 2 days prior there was a car parked in front of their mailbox and they could not get their mail. It is impossible for the department to do enforcement two days after an incident.

A few weeks ago an officer was located at the station and received a call that cars were parked on both sides of the street down at Wildcat Falls and Currier Road. It took about 31/2 minutes to get down to Currier Road, and there was not one single car parked on either side of the road. On one hand we are talking about cars being parked on both sides and on the other receiving a letter indicating the signs on the left side do no good because cars are only parking on the right side. It is one or the other. The frustration comes from everyone wanting the police to enforce these things and for officers to get down there, but you have to remember we are in the midst of a pandemic; there are many other issues they are dealing with in Town, and they don't have any more officers than they did before the pandemic. Because of the pandemic, people want to get out.

Chief Roy stated the need to be patient and understand that things will get better as time goes on. She reiterated the need for residents to contact the department when incidents occur. She cautioned residents about taking photos of cars with Massachusetts license plates and sending them. There is no law that indicates someone from Massachusetts cannot come up here, and there are a lot of people who work in Massachusetts and have cars that are registered out of Massachusetts, but they reside in New Hampshire, rental cars, etc. That is a slippery slope. She cautioned people to not judge someone by their license plate.

The parking signs the Police Department put up were an attempt to help to ensure there were no incidents with parking on both sides of the road prohibiting emergency vehicle access. The department has not received any calls whatsoever this year for cars parked so that a fire truck could not get through.

Commissioner Swisher stated he is not in favor of completely closing the property, but did come across an idea; perhaps temporarily turn the property into a resident only park. The primary issue with parking and chaos in the neighborhood seems to be one of volume. Most of the problems disappear, including the need to expand the lot on maybe all but the best summer days, if residents only. That could buy us time if we were to go that route until there is an alternate access point in place. It is a small neighborhood park,



originally named Eighty Acres. The numbers provided of the amount of individuals coming in and out of the neighborhood over the weekends are jaw dropping to him.

He is uncertain the option of the high school parking lot would work when school is in session. Ultimately, he would like to see all access for the general public coming out of Watson Park. Perhaps, at that point, the lot in the Currier Road neighborhood could be resident only. If not making it resident only, expanding the lot would take some cars off the street.

Councilor Albert commented on other access points noting Kyle Fox, Director, Public Works Department (PWD) was available to discuss the foot bridge. He requested he be asked to provide that information at this point noting the closed foot bridge takes significant access away from the park. Commissioner Tenhave stated, if also the will of the Commission, he was hopeful Director Fox could speak to expansion options as well as the Town Loop Trail.

Kyle Fox, Director, PWD, remarked the pedestrian bridge that connects over the Souhegan River (next to the F.E. Everett Turnpike) connects East Chamberlain Road to West Chamberlin Road, the high school, and down into the trails and into Wildcat Falls, and will eventually tie into the Souhegan River Trail project.

The bridge was recently closed. The NHDOT did a bridge inspection last fall and determined there were deficiencies. Because of access to the underside of the bridge, they could not really tell how significant the problem was or was not. The Town hired a consultant to do an in-depth inspection. The inspectors were out there for 3 days and removed most of the wood planks to be able to see the structural steel members under the decking. What they found was significant rusting, pinholes, and some baseball sized holes in the structural members below the decking, which forced the immediate closure of the bridge.

On Friday of last week the inspection report was received from the consultant confirming the decision to close the bridge. The report went on to discuss repair or replacement options. For this bridge, repair is not really an option. Because of the way corrosion has taken place, were we to fix some of the worst members to get it back open, it is likely only a short period of time before other members would corrode causing it to be closed again. The only viable solution seems to be replacement. The estimate is approx. \$660,000. He is of the belief the PWD and the Town Manager will be discussing this with the Town Council at some point. In the meantime, Director Fox is reaching out to NHDOT to determine if there are bridge or alternate transportation programs from which short-term funding might be obtained so that we can get that critical connection back open. At this point, being outside of budget season, and happening rather quickly, we do not have any plans.

Commissioner Starr spoke of having visited Wildcat Falls several times over the past few weeks. On weekends he has seen 83, 66, and 56 cars (about 2:00 p.m. each day) and on weekdays he has seen 33, and today there were 15 cars, which was capacity for the lot. He has taken measurements of the proposed parking lot area. Were the lot expanded, at its most aggressive, we would see capacity go to 35. It would not meet the demand of the current situation although it would help during the hot summer days.

What he has seen as the best solution is for the high school parking lot to be utilized as the main lot when school is not in session. The distance from the high school parking lot to the trail to the park on the other side of the bridge is about a ½ mile walk. The main trail is not well maintained and has a lot of steep edges. There is a second trail behind the softball field that is much safer, but also much more hidden. There would have to be directional signage. He noted the retention pond near the current entrance has seen a lot of trash.

Commissioner Glenn stated agreement with not expanding the parking lot reiterating the experience at the HHNP. She questioned if the Commission has the authority to restrict the area to residents only, and if so, how that would be enforced. She suggested another possibility to be to completely close the entrance to vehicles and pedestrians. If only closing the lot, people will just park on the street. She questioned if residents have voiced an opinion relative to no parking on the road

Councilor Albert stated his belief there would have to be an amendment to Town ordinances to address resident only parking. He commented on the use of tags/stickers at Wasserman Park and the onerous burden it has been.

Commissioner Perry echoed the remarks of Chief Roy that residents need to reach out to the Police Department when a situation is occurring. He questioned the Commission's ability to restrict public property to residents only and whether an ordinance can be put in place restricting parking to one side of a street. Anything suggested to the Town Council would have to be supported and approved by the Council to become part of the Ordinance before the police could enforce it.

The police have put up temporary no parking signs. If that is enforceable by them great, but he does not think the residents want signs in front of their front yards all the time. He is uncertain there are a lot of options for the short term.

Commissioner Swisher suggested speed bumps could be an option to address speed concerns.

Commissioner Rosati suggested changing the name back to Eighty Acres. She is aware the Community Development Department receives quite a few calls from people wanting to know about the water falls. She suggested taking information off the website for a period of time. There is the need to let some time go by and the current situation calm.

Chief Roy commented because speed was a concern that kept coming up, a speed sign was placed in the neighborhood, which captured an average of all speeds. Eighty five percent of vehicle traffic follows the speed limit or under. There were a few here and there that exceeded the 30 mph speed limit. Eighty five percent is fairly good for a neighborhood of that size, especially given that straight away. There are other roads where only 50% of the time people are going the speed limit. Speed does not appear to be a factor in this neighborhood; it is an average speed.

Commissioner Tenhave remarked when he resided in the area, the Highway Safety Committee was asked to look at the issue of speed, and the numbers were pretty similar to what the Chief just spoke about. There was a 20 mph sign put up. Those signs are advisory; not required. To make that sign permanent required a number of other activities, e.g., legal process to have a speed limit below 30 mph in a residential area.

Councilor Albert questioned the peak traffic times and number of vehicles.

Commissioner Starr commented he did some quick research on the legality of banning non-residents from a public park, and found two cases; Connecticut Supreme Court and New Jersey Supreme Court. Both found that you cannot legally ban non-residents from a public park.

Commissioner Rosati questioned if Wildcat Falls is a public park or a Town owned park that we have a measure of control over. Commissioner Tenhave stated uncertainty there is a legal differentiation. Commissioner Rosati questioned how the Town is able to do it at Wasserman Park.

Councilor Albert noted a restriction associated with Federal funds utilized at Wasserman Park disallowed it being a resident only park. However, based on how the money was expended, we could control access to the water. That is why the beach is residents only. It would depend on how we came about acquiring Eighty Acres/Wildcat Falls, and whether there is any language that would prohibit it.

Commissioner Tenhave stated the Town purchased the property from the State of New Hampshire for \$1 in 1970 with no strings attached. The Deed is fairly simple.

Councilor Albert stated he would bring the issue up to the Town Manager, and perhaps legal counsel could be asked for an opinion.

Commissioner Perry suggested if the Police Department has captured information on peak traffic times it might be a good way to provide targeted enforcement. If they are able to put up no parking signs and limit on-street parking that could be done right away.

Asked about grant funding the department received in 2015, Director Fox stated his belief what was being referred to was the DOT and Federal Highways Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) grant funding. The Town was successful in receiving 2 grants. The first was for the Souhegan River Trail project and the second for the Woodbury sidewalk. The Souhegan River Trail project turned out to be far more complicated and expensive than anticipated. The 2 grants were merged to fund the one project. As of Monday, the environmental document for Federal Highway was submitted to NHDOT by the consultant along with the final preliminary design. Once approval is received on those documents, we will move into final design. There is the possibility of construction next summer or the summer following depending on when Federal funding is available.

Paul Labrie, 30 Beebe Lane

This current situation has made people aware of the wonderful parks that exist in Merrimack. He does not believe the level of traffic will return to what it was 3-6 months ago. He cautioned the Commission on being mindful that whatever action is taken at Wildcat Falls will have an impact on the other properties.

He suggested the Town investigate resident only parking on the streets. He spoke of residents of Beebe Lane leaving notes on cars; have had a problem with people parking perpendicular on the road. When someone parks that way there is a much smaller turning radius; cars cannot turn around and end up backing out into driveways. Notes are left on the trailhead sign explaining how to park in a cul-de-sac.

He suggested residents have to take it upon themselves to call people out on activities such as throwing trash out, parking in front of mailboxes or blocking driveways, etc. People have to get involved. You have to take it into your own hands sometimes.

Chief Roy stated she does not believe it is a smart choice to confront anyone on any issue. If there is a parking problem, residents should contact the police department. If you start confronting people it will create more problems.

Director Fox displayed the plan for the Souhegan River Trail project. The project was conceived before 2009 by the Town Center Committee with the development of the Pedestrian and Trail Master Plan as part of their iTRaC project. This was the #1 trail project on the plan. The project focuses in the southwestern portion of Watson Park. The existing horseshoe shaped sidewalk in Watson Park is where the river trail

project will start. It will start at the existing sidewalk, come down through the fenced in area, and eventually work its way into the old tannery beds below D.W. Highway. He pointed to an area on the plan delineated in a light yellow color noting the existing sidewalk at the road surface level that is covered with steel plates. The project will address that issue as they will fill in the entire area.

The trail will wind its way into the sluiceway that is part of the Chamberlain Bridge. It will make its way through the sluiceway and get over towards the area of the fire station (lower). Will move past the fire station and cross where the old impoundment of water used to be. Prior to the Pennichuck dam being removed there was a large wetland area. Once the dam was removed, the barriers holding the water back eroded away and the area is now fairly dry although it remains pretty hydric soils and will require supportive structure work to place a large culvert in to maintain the stream crossing and to support the trail through that area.

Eventually, the trail makes its way to the other side of the impoundment where the trails go up into Wildcat Falls and the pedestrian bridge that is currently closed. Director Fox displayed a photo of the connectivity of the trails in Town.

Paul Marone, 29 Currier Road

Reiterated police officers have had a presence in the neighborhood. He is under the impression their hands have been tied in many situations with what they can and cannot do. He commented on how the area has become a destination point for people from all over and in high volumes.

He is of the belief the police are unable to ticket motorists parked in front of the temporary no parking signs.

Chief Roy responded they cannot issue tickets. The temporary signs were erected out of courtesy to try to prevent people from parking there. The issue has been before the Town Council, but in order to make that enforceable, it has to go through a process of the Town Council, which includes a Public Hearing. At this point, it is just to try to keep people from parking on both sides of the road, which the department has not been finding as a problem.

Paul Marone, 29 Currier Road

Commented on having noticed over the weekend that the temporary no parking signs were helpful. He suggested it is an indication perhaps the resident only parking in this neighborhood would be effective.

***There being no objection, the Commission recessed at 8:39 p.m.  
The Commission reconvened at 8:42 p.m.***

Commissioner Tenhave continued his presentation noting additional suggestions for alternatives moving forward:

Next year (6-12 months)

- expansion of the current parking lot
- additional parking locations utilizing different access points to the property
- do nothing or anything else

Commissioner Tenhave displayed a photo showing the end of West Chamberlain Drive commenting that option would rely on there being a pedestrian bridge, which we no longer have open. That could be something that needs to be looked at in the much longer term.

Director Fox addressed access from Watson Park utilizing the Souhegan River Trail. He commented on the size of the parking lot for Watson Park, guessing it does not go beyond 20-25 spaces. Another option is access from the high school. There are two trails.

Commissioner Tenhave commented on having been on the Town Council during the time the pedestrian bridge went in. The Council was looking at options for getting to the property and relieving parking while the highway stuff was going on, and looked at a bridge over by the ballfields and behind the highway garage as an option, but the width of that bridge made it fairly cost prohibitive.

One or more years out

- Watson Park connection through Town Loop Trail to Wildcat Falls
- do nothing or anything else

Commissioner Tenhave questioned the will of the Commission.

Councilor Albert suggested pulling the information off the website for a period of time may be helpful. Residents need to contact the police department in real time. He questioned if the Commission should be getting to the trails behind the high school and clearing them to provide for better access and providing better signage to make them more accessible. Longer term suggestions would be for residential only parking and residential only use of parks along with improvements such as replacement of the footbridge.

Commissioner Rosati read in to the record the letter received from Dr. Mark McLaughlin, Superintendent, SAU 26:

*“In response to your email, I’m pleased to tell you that at last night’s School Board meeting, the Board authorized Administration to reach out to you regarding your request relative to parking, etc. We will be happy to partner with you for sure. I have reached out to our Maintenance Director and Business Administrator for guidance about signage, etc. I will get back to you shortly with answers to that and other questions. What is your timeframe for firm answers? Again, we will do whatever we can to support the Conservation Commission with this request, it may just take a day or so to address the particulars. I look forward to partnering. Regards, Mark McLaughlin”*

**MOTION BY COUNCILOR ALBERT TO REMOVE REFERENCE TO THE WILDCAT FALLS  
CONSERVATION AREA FROM THE COMMISSION’S WEBSITE  
MOTION SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER ROSATI**

ON THE QUESTION

Asked about the amount of effort involved in removing the information, Commissioner Tenhave stated it would be somewhat of a challenge, and may require some assistance from the web designers. It may be that there is some expense involved.

Asked about the number of hits the website receives, he indicated, he no longer sees the number of views the website receives. Commissioner Boisvert questioned whether the effort would have the desired effect,

e.g., whether that is the source of how people find out about Wildcat Falls, and commented on the likelihood the information is reaching more people through the L.L. Bean catalogue, etc.

Commissioner Perry stated a desire to first determine if removing a portion of the website is something that can be done in the manner desired, as he would not wish to take the website apart to accomplish something we cannot be certain will have an impact. Commissioner Tenhave stated his belief he could accomplish most of the intent of the task without incurring a cost. There are more ways to find Wildcat Falls on the internet than Merrimack Outdoors although it does pop up near the top of the list if doing a Google search.

*A Viva Voce Roll Call was taken, which resulted as follows:*

Yea: Commissioner Rosati, Councilor Albert, Commissioner Glenn, Commissioner Perry,  
Commissioner Starr, Commissioner Boisvert, Vice Chair Perkins

7

Nay:

0

**MOTION CARRIED**

Commissioner Perry questioned if the police department has identified the times of high traffic volume, and if there is the ability for patrols during those times to determine if a police presence will have an impact. Chief Roy stated she would provide information on the times of high traffic counts. Commissioner Perry stated the desire for enforcement during high traffic times. Chief Roy responded, even in the busier times, they will try to get there as frequently as possible, but it is not always possible.

Asked if the temporary no parking signage would remain for the coming weeks, Chief Roy indicated the signage would remain at the moment. She was uncertain of the exact timeframe for when it would be removed although she anticipates it will likely come down within the next few weeks. Commissioner Boisvert suggested consideration be given to leaving it up. Chief Roy noted that decision has to come from the Town Manager. It was at the direction of the Town Manager that the signs were erected.

Vice Chair Perkins noted that in addition to any recommendations coming from the Commission, the Highway Safety Committee would also be making recommendations to the Town Manager and Town Council.

Chief Roy indicated the Highway Safety Committee would meet the following week.

**MOTION BY VICE CHAIR PERKINS TO RECOMMEND THE HIGHWAY SAFETY  
COMMITTEE LOOK AT THE CONTINUED USE OF THE TEMPORARY NO PARKING SIGNS**

**ON THE QUESTION**

Chief Roy reiterated the no parking ban has to come from the Town Council. The temporary signs were erected after consultation with the Town Manager and Town Council as a means of trying to eliminate some of these problems. The only way they can remain for an extended period of time is if going before the Town Council; has to be for an event or an emergency. This is not considered an emergency or an event. That is the only time those signs can be erected and be enforced. She indicated the discussion of no parking would take place at the committee meeting.



Asked if another item for discussion would be around the possibility of resident only parking, Chief Roy responded it would be something the committee would discuss; however, any formal action would be that of the Town Council.

Councilor Albert stated he would present to the Town Manager that the signs be left in place regardless of whether or not they are enforceable, and will support that with the Town Council.

He questioned the possibility of allocating overtime for directed patrols during the peak traffic times in that neighborhood. Chief Roy stated she would discuss that with the Town Manager.

It was recognized that Chief Roy, Chair of the Highway Safety Committee, had heard the concerns of the Commission, and would bring them forward to the committee.

### **MOTION WITHDRAWN**

Commissioner Rosati suggested removing the word “Falls” from the name. Although not an immediate result, if removing “Falls” or changing the name of the property back to Eighty Acres (name changed when property size increased) eventually, people would forget. Those who have just discovered hiking because of our present circumstance, will forget about it after a while.

She believed the idea behind the purchase of the property was for it to be a community treasure; a place to be preserved for the community. She does not wish to draw attention to the fact that there are waterfalls. After the tour bus that visited the property, she received a message from another that wanted to bring two busloads full of Italian tourists who had come to Boston to attend the opera, were going to the outlets, and wanted to visit the waterfalls.

### **MOTION MADE BY COMMISSIONER ROSATI TO CHANGE THE NAME OF THE WILDCAT FALLS CONSERVATION AREA TO EIGHTY ACRES MOTION SECONDED BY COUNCILOR ALBERT**

#### **ON THE QUESTION**

Vice Chair Perkins commented he wonders if the damage is done. What we have been through in the past 8 weeks has forced people, who never knew the trails existed before, to use it repeatedly. Were we to change the name, how long would it really take for a move like that to gain traction and start dissuading out-of-state visitors from coming to us?

Commissioner Perry remarked changing the name will not remove it from the other websites, etc.

Commissioner Tenhave noted the Commission can only recommend a name change. A change would have to go through the Town Council. Councilor Albert stated his belief the next meeting of the Town Council has not yet been scheduled. He is hopeful it will be within the next few weeks. At the very least, it could be 1-1½ months before such a change would become official, if supported.

Commissioner Rosati remarked this would not solve the immediate problem, but is something she believes would be a long-term solution.

Asked if Wildcat Conservation would be too similar a name to accomplish the desire effect, Commissioner Rosati stated her belief it would.

Commissioner Boisvert believes there to be the potential, in the long term, the wording might make a difference (be more lost on the internet).

*A Viva Voce Roll Call was taken, which resulted as follows:*

Yea: Commissioner Rosati, Commissioner Glenn, Commissioner Boisvert, Councilor Albert

4

Nay: Commissioner Perry, Commissioner Starr, Vice Chair Perkins

3

**MOTION CARRIED**

Commissioner Tenhave suggested removal of the Heritage Trail sign at the intersection of Currier Road and Baboosic Lake Road and anywhere else on the property where there may be such signs. With the wood cutting that was done in 2010/2011, updates to the sewer system going in, the trail, in its original form, no longer exists.

**MOTION BY COUNCILOR ALBERT TO REMOVE THE “HERITAGE TRAIL” SIGN FROM THE INTERSECTION OF CURRIER ROAD AND BABOOSIC LAKE ROAD AND ANY OTHERS LOCATED ON THE CURRENT PROPERTY  
MOTION SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER ROSATI**

*A Vice Voce Roll Call was taken, which resulted as follows:*

Yea: Commissioner Glenn, Commissioner Rosati, Commissioner Perry, Commissioner Starr,  
Commissioner Boisvert, Councilor Albert, Vice Chair Perkins

7

Nay:

0

**MOTION CARRIED**

Councilor Albert indicated he would contact the Town Manager and make her aware of the recommendation of the Commission. Noted was that the signage was purchased and erected by the Heritage Trail Committee, which was disbanded some time ago (likely before 2007). Councilor Albert stated the request would be made for the signage to be removed, and, if required, he would request the item be placed on an agenda for the Town Council.

Commissioner Starr questioned if the Commission has the authority to erect a sign at the entrance of Wildcat Falls directing overflow parking to the high school parking lot. Commissioner Tenhave suggested that to be an action that should be done in conjunction with the School District.

Commissioner Rosati stated she was waiting for direction from the Superintendent of Schools. She questioned if there is the need to clear trails from the high school before erecting signage. Councilor Albert responded they can be walked, but there is the need for trail clearing.

Commissioner Starr spoke of being in the area earlier in the day noting the trails are not in perfect condition, but are visible. He volunteered to return to the area the next day and clear the trails. The trail behind the softball field is pretty clear. It is the first trail you see that is a little hidden. It is a bit more complicated; fallen tree, etc. The trail is not perfectly defined, but anyone walking the trail would be able to see where to go next.

Asked about trailhead signage and trail markers, Commissioner Perry noted it to be school property, and the need to coordinate any signage with the School District. Commissioner Tenhave cautioned doing any maintenance on the trail prior to understanding if that is desired. Commissioner Rosati was asked to follow up with the School District so that the subject could be revisited at the next Commission meeting.

Commissioner Perry responded to the question of placing signage at Wildcat Falls directing overflow parking indicating that is within the abilities of the Commission, but if directing traffic to the property of another, we should first meet with that property owner.

**MOTION BY COUNCILOR ALBERT TO ENCUMBER THE SUM OF TWO HUNDRED DOLLARS (\$200.00) FOR THE CREATION OF TWO TRAILHEAD SIGNS FOR THE TWO (2) TRAILS OFF OF O'GARA DRIVE. FUNDS ARE AVAILABLE IN FUND 53  
MOTION SECONDED BY VICE CHAIR PERKINS**

ON THE QUESTION

Commissioner Boisvert commented on the trail by the softball field needing a sign directing people to it from the high school parking lot.

**AMENDED MOTION BY COUNCILOR ALBERT TO ENCUMBER AN AMOUNT UP TO THREE HUNDRED DOLLARS (\$300.00) FOR THE CREATION OF THREE (3) TRAILHEAD SIGNS  
MOTION SECONDED BY VICE CHAIR PERKINS**

ON THE QUESTION

Commissioner Perry suggested the number of signs not be identified/limited.

**AMENDED MOTION BY COUNCILOR ALBERT TO ENCUMBER AN AMOUNT UP TO THREE HUNDRED DOLLARS (\$300.00) FOR THE CREATION OF TRAILHEAD SIGNAGE FOR THE TRAILS LEADING FROM BEHIND THE HIGH SCHOOL, AND TO ENABLE GINA ROSATI TO EXPEND THE FUNDS FOR THIS PURPOSE. FUNDS ARE AVAILABLE IN FUND 53  
MOTION SECONDED BY VICE CHAIR PERKINS**

*A Vice Voce Roll Call was taken, which resulted as follows:*

Yea: Commissioner Rosati, Commissioner Glenn, Commissioner Perry, Commissioner Starr,  
Commissioner Boisvert, Councilor Albert, Vice Chair Perkins

7

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED**

Commissioner Tenhave questioned the will of the Commission relative to the suggestion made to close all access to the property. Commissioner Swisher spoke of a willingness to investigate the possibility of the property, inclusive of the parking lot, being resident access only. He views that as a means of resolving the

volume issues, which in turn would resolve the parking and trash problems. He is uncertain that is possible. Councilor Albert stated his belief it is possible. He questioned the enforcement ability.

Commissioner Swisher questioned how that is managed at the Town portion of the beach at Baboosic Lake. Commissioner Boisvert indicated there is no Merrimack portion of the Town beach at Baboosic Lake; Four Seasons has a private beach and Amherst has their town beach. Commissioner Tenhave remarked what Merrimack has is fire lanes that lead down to the lake, which are barely visible. Merrimack residents used to be able to pay a fee to utilize the Amherst beach. He is uncertain if that relationship remains.

Commissioner Swisher commented you could utilize transfer station stickers to easily identify residents. It is something that could be a short-term solution. Re-routing traffic to the high school sounds like the best answer that is in the works as a result of this meeting. The Superintendent seems to be amenable to working with us. He is uncertain of the kind of volume they can support or whether that is a long-term solution as it will really only work when school is not in session. He had hoped the outcome of this meeting would be something the neighborhood could be a little more hopeful about for the near term.

Commissioner Tenhave questioned if a legal opinion could be sought and what the process would look like. Councilor Albert stated that could occur, and indicated he would email the Town Manager and request a legal opinion be sought.

Commissioner Tenhave spoke of the Town Loop and the need to see that get implemented before further action can occur. Coming in from Watson Park will require crossing property owned by the State. In previous attempts to speak to the State about utilizing their property to access Commission property, their response has been that they have not put up signage or discouraged anyone. However, they did not wish to get into a firm agreement. The Commission can always address it again once it is known funding is in place and construction will begin.

There being no further recommendations, Commissioner Tenhave suggested the item be placed on the agenda for the Commission's next meeting, and that a request be made that the Commission return to a regular meeting schedule.

Vice Chair Perkins indicated he would speak with the Community Development Department the following day to discuss scheduling of meetings whether in person or virtual.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

### **MOTION BY VICE CHAIR PERKINS TO ADJOURN MOTION SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER PERRY**

*A Viva Voce Roll Call was taken, which resulted as follows:*

Yea: Commissioner Perry, Commissioner Rosati, Commissioner Glenn, Commissioner Boisvert,  
Councilor Albert, Commissioner Starr, Vice Chair Perkins

7

Nay:

0

### **MOTION CARRIED**

The May 19, 2020 Special meeting of the Merrimack Conservation Commission was adjourned at 9:36 p.m.

Submitted by Dawn MacMillan

From: [smarone](#)

Sent: Monday, May 04, 2020 1:43 PM

To: Tom Koenig

Cc: Bill Boyd; Lon Woods; Nancy Harrington; Finlay Rothhaus; Barbara Healey; Pete Albert; Eileen Cabanel

Subject: Wildcat Falls Safety Concerns

Good Afternoon,

I am writing to you in hopes for a solution to our current problem with our neighborhood traffic and high volume of people in and out of the conservation area.

We live on Currier Rd. in near Wildcat Falls and over this past weekend, especially Sunday, our quiet neighborhood had a steady flow of traffic, many traveling at high speeds and disregard for the safety of others. We spent our entire day watching the influx of out of state cars flooding the streets looking for a place to park since the parking lot for Wildcat Falls was at capacity by 9:00 AM. The cars are lining the streets making it impossible for emergency vehicles to get through if they had to.

I have lived here for 4 years and have never seen the Wildcat Falls area so heavily trafficked. People are littering, graffiti has been spotted, and people are having fire pits which is strictly prohibited, and I fear will start a brush fire, creating a situation where firetrucks wouldn't be able to access since the roads are blocked with so many vehicles.

We moved to this neighborhood because we fell in love with the safety of the area and we do not understand why anything can't be done during this COVID-19 situation. It seems to me that social distancing is being ignored and almost encouraged by allowing this situation to occur without any rules. Why can't this area only be allowed for Merrimack residents and only have a walk in access? At one point yesterday, I counted 25 Massachusetts license plates parked on the street. This was not including the parking lot.

This is unacceptable and should not be allowed. We are being put at risk in our own neighborhood. There are people in our neighborhood that are high risk that can't even enjoy being in their own yard during the good weather because of all these crowds. And our children who are cooped up in the house can not ride their bikes or take a walk safely anymore. This is something I always felt safe letting them do before this crisis. And it is due to the amount of traffic and the speed at which these vehicles are traveling.

I am saddened by this whole situation. I understand that people need to get outside especially during these difficult times, but we should not be put at risk and our rights should not be infringed upon because there are no limitations put in place for this conservation area.

I fear for the footprint this will leave on the conservation area with all the pollution and disrespect from the people using this land.

Please help us bring safety back to our peaceful neighborhood during these troubling times.

Thank you for your time and consideration...I know you are working tirelessly to keep us all safe and it is much appreciated!

Sincerely,  
Susan Marone  
29 Currier Road



From: Brenna Hansen  
Sent: Monday, May 04, 2020 12:15 PM  
To: Tom Koenig; Bill Boyd; Lon Woods; Nancy Harrington; Finlay Rothhaus; Barbara Healey; Pete Albert; Eileen Cabanel  
Subject: Speed and Traffic Issue on Currier Road

We've lived on Currier Road for thirteen years and have seen both the volume and the speed of traffic on the road increase drastically, especially in recent months. I'm concerned any time my children walk their dog or ride bikes as many of the vehicles go too fast and don't leave ample space for pedestrians. I've had to restrict their ability to walk or ride so that they can only do so with an adult, which is sad as they are at the age where they should be able to safely gain some independence in our neighborhood (part of the reason we bought here!).

We have also noticed an increase in trash tossed in our front yard as well as throughout Wildcat Falls. Unfortunately, that area where we used to enjoy hiking has become far too crowded to enjoy, with people and cars overflowing in to the street. There is no possible way to hike or walk safely at Wildcat currently as the number of people makes it impossible to keep a six foot distance. Last night (Sunday, 5/3) at 7pm we entered the lot thinking it may be late enough to take a short walk however the lot was so full of people, none of whom were abiding by social distancing, that we had to turn back as there was no passage to the trails since people were blocking the entire lot.

As a long-term citizen of Merrimack and someone who has worked within the community through Parks & Rec and scouting, I have no doubt Merrimack can pull together to find a solution to this issue. We'd love to see the town do something to curb speeding and keep the traffic - both foot and vehicle - to a reasonable level.

--

Brenna Hansen  
3 Currier Road  
Merrimack, NH 03054

From: [Grace](#)  
Sent: Thursday, May 07, 2020 5:03 PM  
To: Gina Rosati  
Subject: Public Comment

From: Grace Wilson, 35 Currier Road, the last house that abuts the entrance to the falls.

My mom and I live in the house on the corner right next to the entrance to the parking lot at the falls,. My mom has lived here for 55 years and I have lived here 50 years. We have never had any issues living on the land adjacent to the falls until the town purchased it, put the parking lot in and publicized its location.

We and the neighbors fought against the lot going in but were not listened too. Our concerns of more traffic, partying, drugs, drinking and vandalism has come to pass and has made our neighborhood unsafe and has brought us to this moment.

We didnt realize the town was going to publicize the parks whereabouts in travel magazines and the LL Bean Catalog and utube. We would have fought against that as well,and we could have told the town it was not in the best interests of the town or neighborhood or the park to do this.

It has created a mess and has become disruptive to our way of life. We have counted over 150 cars on the recent Saturdays and Sundays. Cars, people animals all day long.

We even had a tour bus from Canada drop over 75 people off last year and the bus idled for over an hour before it finally moved. The neighborhood called the police and we were told, "it's a nice day and a holiday, don't worry about it". That was the end to our neighborhood safety and homey feel.

Addition to the heavy traffic, cars are blocking our driveways and mailboxes, and the only fire hydrant, people are throwing trash and allowing their pets to defecate on our lawns. The street is so crowded with cars that people and their dogs are walking on all the lawns to get to the entrance to the falls trespassing on our property. They hang out on our lawns playing loud music and talking loudly and just being rude to the people who live in the homes. We even had sunbathers on our lawn with their car stereo playing and them laying on our lawn in swimsuits, they didn't care they were trespassing.

The cars are parked one on top of the other in front of our homes, a lot of us have sprinkler systems and the tops get broken off due to being driven over when cars park on our lawns and each time there is a cost to us to repair our sprinkler systems.

The increased traffic has taken away our safe neighborhood so children can no longer ride bikes or play or walk their dogs. People can not walk down the street due to the amount of cars and the speeds they are traveling at. Our posted 20 mile an hour speed limit sign went missing.

Cars attempting 2 way traffic when cars are parked in front on one side of the street creates gridlock. Cars are parked on the right hand side often blocking the fire hydrant, creates dangerous conditions for emergency vehicles to get down the street, park and stage rescue and recovery. They normally park in front of our house and this won't happen if the cars are allowed to continue to park at the lower circle of Currier Road. Cars will have to be towed and precious time would be lost for a rescue or putting out a fire.

The town has another access point to Wildcat falls near Merrimack High School, and there is ample parking at the other entrance. The repairs to the footbridge should be a top priority and the Currier Road access should be used for local and foot traffic only. There is no reason why the Currier Road Neighborhood families lives should be disrupted with another access point available to the town and visitors.

While the bridge is being repaired I am asking that no parking signs be placed on the entire lower circle of Currier Road. You have placed them on the left hand side but no one was parking on the left hand side to begin with, they are parking on the right hand side. We need the right side around the lower circle no parking as well.

My personal story ties into what is going on with the amount of traffic and people parking on our lawn and in front of our home on Currier Road.

I have PTSD, Panic Disorder and Anxiety Disorder along with 2 different brain injuries I received in a car accident. What people don't understand about PTSD is it comes on suddenly by being triggered. Mine is triggered by the opening and closing of car doors and trunks slamming, the locking of cars with the beeping and the car alarms going off. My brain injuries make me need a quiet lifestyle without a lot of crowds or activity. It's why I live at home and not in the city. My home on Currier road has always been my safe haven, wildcat falls has always been my place of calm and tranquility, but I don't feel safe anymore.

My PTSD is triggered and my panic and anxiety attacks are amplified. Add a lot of strangers walking in front of my home and I don't feel safe. I don't feel safe in a home I have lived in for 50 years. The woods that gave me solice now five me fear. I live in a constant state of panic and anxiety to the point where I don't go outside in my front yard very often anymore. My bedroom faces the street, I have had move my bed is as far from the windows as possible, I dont open my windows or my shades anymore because everytime I look out I see strangers out front and it sets off my conditions. I shouldn't have to live like this. I shouldn't be afraid in my own home or out in my yard, in my neighborhood or down the trails I know like a second skin. My whole way of life has been affected by the amount of cars and strangers in front of my home.

Having no parking on the lower circle, especially in front of our home, would help on so many levels. It would allow our children to ride their bikes, play and walk their dogs. It would allow traffic flow easier to and from the lot It would allow emergency vehicles a place to stage and rescue. And Lastly it would personally assist me and calm my PTSD episodes, my anxiety disorder and panic attacks so I could function more normally on a daily basis. I would feel safer in my home and outside in my yard. Our neighbors should be able to have their children play and ride their bikes, dogs should be walked without the fear of being hit by people speeding down the road. This is an older neighborhood. Most of us have lived here over 40 years. Help us re establish the safety of our neighborhood and open the access point near the highschool. Close parking on Currier Road for people heading to the falls. Thank you  
Grace Fairbairn Wilson

Grace Wilsom  
35 Currier Road

From: PAUL LABRIE  
Sent: Saturday, May 09, 2020 7:27 AM  
To: ConservationCommission  
Subject: Input for scheduled May 19'th Meeting

Conservation Commission,

My understanding is that the May 19'th meeting is to address the Wildcat Falls parking issues as directed by the Town Council so I'm not sure other agenda items can be added, or as of today if it's too late to propose them. I believe my proposal below would directly benefit not only Wildcat Falls but all town Conservation properties. If not possible to be taken up as an agenda item I'd like it read and/or recorded for public record as I am not sure I will be available to call in to do so myself. My comment below;

"In a number of communities with high tourist season influxes of visitors, the town provides for "street residents only" parking and stickers for the residents who live on the street.

Why can't similar "Street Residents Parking Only" be done on the streets abutting the Conservation area's designated parking areas such as those at Wildcat Falls and Horse Hill? This should also be done in conjunction with designating specific spots or areas for parking at other trailheads such as Beebe Lane or Conservation Drive abutting Grater Woods where there is only on street parking available.

The town should be able to mine data through the state vehicle registration database and send stickers for the resident's registered vehicles. If not then the Town Clerk could give out stickers to the home/vehicle owners when requested in person or when a vehicle is registered that will allow them to street park in designated "Street Residents Only" areas. This will give the Police Department the ability to differentiate and ticket those not following the "street residents only" rule.

This will not only limit the number of visitors to the conservation areas which will help enforce social distancing, but will aid in limiting the growing trail and parking area garbage and other rule infractions on the trails and will also lower the parking congestion and traffic on the streets abutting the trailheads."

Thank You,

Paul Labrie  
30 Beebe Lane  
Merrimack NH

From: Amy Simoneau  
Sent: Tuesday, May 19, 2020 7:55 AM  
To: ConservationCommission  
Cc: Amy Simoneau  
Subject: 5.19.2020 Public Comment

To all members of Merrimack Conservation Commission:

Please accept this email as a public comment to your May 19th, 2020 meeting regarding parking at Wildcat Falls. THIS<<https://youtu.be/Im41OuANoX8>> video link shows the Currier Road neighborhood concerns. I created the video with the support and input from the Currier Road community. Please share publicly via "screen share" during the virtual meeting.

Visualize for a second... yourself in your neighborhood standing out on your front lawn during a warm, sunny weekend day. You'd be lucky to see one or two cars in a 10 minute time span and most likely it's one of your neighbors passing through or someone heading to the WFCA parking lot. You smile and watch your kids laugh and play outside in the front yard and ride their bikes. Once in awhile you think about the calls you've made in the past to authorities regarding traffic issues to WFCA or when cars were still parked in the parking lot after sunset. You had stopped calling the town members after awhile because you felt your calls were ignored and nothing changed regarding the situations.

In 2011 the WFCA parking lot was expanded which was not what was planned and promised for your neighborhood. You had many concerns about the expansion, yet your voice seemed ignored once again. A heritage sign was put up on Baboosic Lake Road and social media has made Wildcat Falls, what use to be called 80 Acres, another public "waterfall" to visit. Traffic issues increased in the neighborhood and litter on the trails and parking lot became a new problem.

Now, visualize at least one car per minute speeding pass your house and only slowing down to find room to park next to your mailbox and crowd you in your own driveway. Cars are overflowing the side streets, intersections and emergency vehicles are restricted from getting to and from Wildcat Falls parking lot safely. Your children would like to go outside and play, but now you can't let them. A beautiful, sunny weekend has become too dangerous for your kids. There is too much traffic. Strange people are now walking on your front yard and dog excrement is left behind for you to pick up. You've been in this neighborhood for over 12 years. You've called, written to several town members, yet the issues you've seen over the years never went away. Now with the pandemic you raise your concerns again, only to feel you are wasting your time because it didn't make a difference years ago. So you stop calling, writing, and stay indoors when the weather brings more people to your neighborhood development. The traffic overflow and parking situation at WFCA continues.

This is a systemic problem induced by the pandemic.

How would you address the problem in your neighborhood? What would you like to see in your neighborhood to control the situation and make sure your neighborhood is safe again?

I, along with other residents, are thankful and pleased to see police patrolling the overcrowded neighborhood. The temporary no parking signs were installed in the Currier Road neighborhood to provide emergency vehicle access to and from WFCA. The only thing missing is enforcing the no parking zone. Cars are parking in a no parking area. So the problem continues. Nothing has changed regarding the parking lot overflow (See photos below).

Do NOT consider expanding the parking lot. We have already done that and it has only created more issues. Expanding the parking lot will bring more traffic, more people, more trash, not protect the wetlands, and increase the town costs to maintain the town property and parking lot. I would like to better understand MCC's GOALS <<https://www.merrimacknh.gov/conservation-commission>> on protecting WFCFA.

Solution:

1. Restricting parking and enforcing tickets in a no parking area would be a good start.
2. Consider Merrimack residents only parking in WFCFA. Can we do something similar to what we have done for Wasserman park? Something needs to be done to reduce (not promote) the amount of traffic in the area.

Let's find a way we can all come together and allow people to enjoy and respect the town property and keep the neighborhood safe.

Sincerely,

Amy Simoneau  
6 Fir Street  
Merrimack, NH 03054



From: Paul Marone  
Sent: Monday, May 18, 2020 10:05 PM  
To: MerrimackOutdoors  
Subject: Wildcat Falls Meeting

To Whom it may concern,

I am writing to you in response to presentation and upcoming meeting involving Wildcat Falls. My wife Susan, our three young children, and myself have been living at 29 Currier Road (just a few houses up from the Wildcat Falls Entrance) now for over 4 years now. We made the decision to bring our family up in Merrimack after much consideration. We specifically chose this beautiful, once quiet, dead end neighborhood so our children could play outside with the neighborhood kids in a relatively safe environment. We have been so happy here and really want nothing more than to remain here as a positive and cooperative member of the community. So much so, we are willing to participate and help in any means we can to maintain or improve this friendly environment.

Unfortunately, over the last few years the traffic, parking, and influx of people to our neighborhood for the use of Wildcat Falls has been consistently growing each year. Last year was getting noticeably worse and now this year it has become completely overrun on a sunny weekend day and even some weekdays. We absolutely love Wildcat Falls and have spent many hours out there as a family in the past. Sadly, now we won't even think of going out there most of the time because there are so many people, not to mention the trash, and blatant disrespect for the property. On some days we don't even feel comfortable in our own driveway because it feels like we live next to the entrance to an amusement park.

Over the past months I have had the opportunity to speak with almost every single resident in this neighborhood and I have yet to meet with one that feels any different than we do about the current situation. So, in an effort to keep this letter on point and not overwhelming I am listing in bullet point form below the issue that we as a neighborhood would like to address.

- There is an extremely high volume of traffic for a dead-end neighborhood. We have security footage of hundreds of cars coming past our house in just a few hours. At some points, more than one car every 30 seconds or less for hours at a time.
- Excessive speeds (because they don't live here so they don't care)
- Parking on our lawns, in front of driveways, mailboxes, and both sides of the street. (photos can be furnished upon request)
- Streets get so blocked that Emergency vehicles can not get in the neighborhood sometimes let alone the parking lot. (photos can be furnished upon request).
- Often there are more out of state vehicles in the neighborhood than those that actually live here. This past Saturday just after 3:00 pm There were 37 vehicles parked on the street from neighboring states.
- Trees being cut up for firewood.
- Fire pits are popping up on the trails.

- Hammocks tied in trees.
- Loud music and parties being held at the falls.
- Graffiti on the rocks.
- There is so much litter it there now most of the neighborhood is giving up on cleaning up after doing so for so long.
- Recently disposed of dirty needles and empty alcohol bottles.

I have reviewed the presentation and options being presented. Here are my thoughts which are echoed by most of the neighborhood. Ultimately, we believe the best option to resolve the majority of the above problems while still keeping Wildcat Falls available to the public is to make the on-street parking available to residence only so that once the lot is full the neighborhood will not be overrun.

1. Near term options 1 to 6 months: We believe due to the Covid 19 issues and the fact that everything else is closed up, everyone is coming here. We are requesting an immediate but temporary shutdown of the Currier Rd parking lot and entrance. Until we can come up with a solution.
2. 6 to 12 months: Extending the parking lot is the worst possible solution as it will only encourage more traffic. The biggest problem is the massive amounts of traffic coming into the neighborhood of people that don't live here. It's a dead-end neighborhood with mall entrance like traffic. Removing the sign at the end of Currier Rd will also be helpful.
3. 1 year out: We believe that the Watson Park entrance and or the High school entrance is a workable option.

We look forward to hearing more about what can be done to help us with these concerns. Most of all we ask, Please, help us get our safe neighborhood back that we have all come to love. We love having Wildcat Falls for all of us to use but not at the expense of those that live here. We have lost our sense of safety and security. We believe that the lot and entrance we set up with the best of intentions and its very unfortunate that it seems to be overgrown for this residential neighborhood as it stands.

Sincerely,  
Paul Marone  
29 Currier Road

From: Brenna Hansen  
Sent: Tuesday, May 19, 2020 1:38 PM  
To: ConservationCommission  
Subject: Public Comment in regards to Parking at Wildcat Falls and Traffic Issue on Currier Road

I've lived on Currier Road for thirteen years and have seen both the volume and the speed of traffic on the road increase drastically, especially in recent months.

I'm concerned any time my children walk their dog or ride bikes as many of the vehicles go too fast and don't leave ample space for pedestrians. I've had to restrict their ability to walk or ride so that they can only do so with an adult, which is sad as they are at the age where they should be able to safely gain some independence in our neighborhood (part of the reason we bought here!).

We have also noticed an increase in trash tossed in our front yard as well as throughout Wildcat Falls. Unfortunately, that area where we used to enjoy hiking has become far too crowded to enjoy, with people and cars overflowing in to the street.

In relationship to the current health issue going on, the behavior I have seen first hand at Wildcat Falls does not coincide with what's being asked of NH citizens. People are crowding the parking lot and trails in large groups with less than 6 feet of space and many are not wearing masks.

There is no possible way to hike or walk safely at Wildcat currently as the number of people makes it impossible to keep a six foot distance. On Sunday, May 3rd at 7pm we entered the lot thinking it may be late enough to take a short walk before sunset. However the lot was so packed full of people, none of whom were abiding by social distancing, that we had to turn back as there was no six foot gap offering safe passage to the trails.

Having the trails open to Merrimack residents ONLY at this time would seem like a simple short-term solution to solve the health-related aspect of the issue at hand.

We'd love to see the town do something long-term to curb speeding and keep the traffic to a reasonable level.

I look forward to finding out what the parties involved have planned to address these concerns from the many Merrimack residents who love their town, love their neighborhood and love their families.

Thank you!

--

Brenna Hansen  
3 Currier Road  
Merrimack, NH 03054

From: Gerry St. Amand  
Sent: Tuesday, May 19, 2020 3:56 PM  
To: ConservationCommission  
Cc: Gerard St. Amand  
Subject: Parking at Wildcat Falls--Public Comment

My Name and address: Gerard (Gerry) St. Amand, 31 Currier Road, Merrimack, resident for 38 years.

Dear Members of the Merrimack Conservation Commission:

Below I have listed some of my concerns specific to the increased traffic and parking at or near the Wildcat Falls Town Conservation area. Thanks for taking the time to consider my input.

Topic: Parking Issues and Concerns at Wildcat Falls

#1.) Safety-The increased vehicular traffic accessing Wildcat Falls presents several safety issues to visitors to Wildcat Falls, to nearby residents in the Currier Road area, and to emergency and rescue vehicles and personnel. Parking, particularly on weekends, regularly overflows onto Currier Road, Hemlock Drive, and Fir Street. Access to our driveways can be difficult, children and families must be hyper vigilant about playing in and using their front yards, and the speed at which some vehicles travel up and down Currier Road exceeds reasonable expectations for driving safely in a residential neighborhood.

#2.) Wildlife Safety: The volume of trash being disposed of in the Wildcat Falls area presents particular concern to the many species of wildlife that inhabit the woods and water. The retention pond near the parking lot is covered with plastic drink containers, plastic waste products, and bags filled with dog droppings. Many turtles, frogs, toads, and birds live in or near the retention pond and all of the trash presents potential hazards to all of the wildlife. Many regular visitors and abutters to the Wildcat Falls area collect and dispose of trash that has accumulated along the trails, near the river, and in the woods. The volume of trash has definitely increased along with the increased pedestrian and vehicular traffic.

#3) Usage after dark-Night Safety: Vehicles access the park after hours throughout the year. When vehicles leave at night their headlights shine directly into our family room, so we know when vehicles are leaving. Empty containers of beer and alcoholic beverages, along with waste products from drug use and sexual activity have been left behind in the park. This is not a daily occurrence, but should not be happening at all.

Wildcat Falls provides a wonderful outside venue for individuals to walk, hike, and observe wildlife. Those of us who live in the neighborhood view it as a hidden gem and treasure. During the COVID-19 pandemic the Wildcat Falls areas provides a wonderful location for people to get outside and enjoy nature. Children and adults benefit from having Wildcat Falls available and accessible. Visitors to the area must act responsibly while in the recreations area, as well as during their access to and from the neighborhood.