



Town of Merrimack, New Hampshire

Community Development Department
6 Baboosic Lake Road
Town Hall - Lower level - East Wing

603 424-3531
Fax 603 424-1408
www.merrimacknh.gov

Planning - Zoning - Economic Development - Conservation

HORSE HILL NATURE PRESERVE SUBCOMMITTEE OF MERRIMACK CONSERVATION COMMISSION NOVEMBER 28, 2023 MEETING MINUTES

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

Members present:

Marc Gagnon, Chair
Tim Adams, Alternate
Kimberly Berger
Ellen Kolb, MCC representative
Paul Lavoie

Member absent:

Lynne Wenz
Christine Nazaka

Mr. Adams sat in as voting member for Ms. Wenz

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Adams moved that the minutes of the September 14, 2023 meeting be approved with the following amendments:

Page 1, line 23: correct the spelling of "East Slope Trail"
Page 2, line 75: replace (last name unknown) with Burant

Seconded by Ms. Nazaka
Motion Carried
6-0-0.

NEW BUSINESS

- **Welcome new member, Kimberly Berger**
The subcommittee was pleased to welcome Ms. Berger. She lives near one of the HHNP trailheads and visits the property frequently.
- **Election of officers for 2024**
Mr. Gagnon said he is willing to continue to serve as subcommittee chair for 2024. Ms. Nazaka is willing to continue as vice-chair. In the absence of other nominees, MOTION

by Ms. Kolb, seconded by Mr. Adams, to re-elect Mr. Gagnon and Ms. Nazaka.
MOTION ADOPTED 6-0-0.

- **2024 meeting schedule**

The subcommittee consensus was to meet in 2024 on March 7, June 4, September 17, and December 3. This takes into consideration the members' work schedules and planned travel.

Discussion of subcommittee goals for 2024 was deferred to the end of the meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS

- **Broken bridge on northeastern section of Loop Trail**

Mr. Gagnon reported that he had completed a total re-build of the bridge, including decking and flashing, with the assistance of other volunteers. This followed an incident where the bridge was damaged under equestrian use, which resulted in injury to the horse. Ms. Kolb expressed appreciation for the photo of the project provided to MCC, which was shared during MCC's recent annual report to the Town Council.

The subcommittee discussed whether signage was needed warning equestrians to walk their horses around HHNP bridges. Mr. Gagnon said he found no standard signage with that specific message, although he did find U.S. Forest Service signage with language advising trail users that they are responsible for their own safety. The consensus of the subcommittee was that no one wants to have a sign at each bridge, and instead there should be language at trailhead kiosks advising all trail users to travel at their own risk. Mr. Gagnon will contact Chair Perkins of MCC about appropriate language for such a message. The subcommittee reviewed other bridge projects that are needed. There's a broken plank on the Blodgett Hill trail bridge, and the area needs a drainage cleanup. Mr. Lavoie will take a look at that. The bridges near Twister Trail and the Watson property will get maintenance soon. The boardwalks near Lastowka Pond will get some attention next year.

- **Northside Trail completion:**

Mr. Lavoie and a team of volunteers from NEMBA recently finished the main part of building this new trail near Twister and Ledges Trails, open to all users but designed for mountain biking. There's some rock work left to be done. Mr. Lavoie and volunteers will watch water flow from the trail over time to see if any modifications will be needed. Leftover material from the project will remain onsite until spring, and will be used for any follow-up work if needed. The GPX file for the route is already on the Trailforks app.

Mr. Lavoie said the resident of 142 Amherst Road, who lives next to a seldom-used access point for HHNP, was a big help for parking and trail access for the project.

Ms. Nazaka asked about blazing for the new trail. Mr. Lavoie will do that with assistance from Ms. Nazaka. Mr. Gagnon will make a temporary trail sign.

- **Kiosk refresh project**

The subcommittee wants to post fresh property maps to replace faded or missing maps at kiosks. This requires map files in a large format, not PDF. Ms. Nazaka reported that neither the Town nor Papergraphics (producer of the trifold PDF HHNP map) has that file. Ms. Kolb suggested that the Nashua Regional Planning Commission might have it. Ms. Nazaka will try to contact Tim Tenhave, who is listed on the NRPC website as a Merrimack contact, to see if he has any information.

Mr. Gagnon said that if he can be provided with an editable map file, he can add trails that have been opened since the current PDF map was created: Horse Hill Summit, the link to Palmeri Drive, Long Pond View, and Northside. Regarding kiosk signs for hunting season, Ms. Kolb said she had not printed or posted anything with hunting season dates. Mr. Gagnon said he found in the Community Development office some signs warning that hunting is allowed, and he has posted them. He also found and posted trail signs for No Motorized Use. Mr. Gagnon said that he has finished painting kiosks and trail markers for this year.

- **Update on MCC's social media plan**

Ms. Kolb reported that MCC Commissioner Karis Welsh is leading a project to set up an MCC Facebook page and to refresh the MCC website (merrimackoutdoors.org). Nick Lavalley of Merrimack TV/Media is providing valuable assistance.

- **Subcommittee goals and priorities for 2024**

Mr. Gagnon asked each subcommittee member to offer ideas. He noted that this is a maintenance-heavy subcommittee, and it's pretty much caught up with major work. His next priority is upgrading kiosk structures.

Mr. Lavoie said that some sections of Loop Trail needs re-routing after heavy use during Covid. He mentioned the areas between Ledges and Loop Trails and around the Palmeri link to Loop.

Mr. Adams said he would be doing more cutting back of invasive multiflora rose next spring. This raised a discussion among subcommittee members of the ongoing problem with invasive. Members acknowledged that eliminating the problem isn't possible for a small group of volunteers. Mr. Gagnon suggested that perhaps the Town DPW could mow or cut back the edges of the link from the Amherst Road parking lot to Loop Trail near Lastowka Pond.

Ms. Nazaka would like to see the kiosks as information centers, with fresh maps each marked with "you are here" at the appropriate spot. Ms. Berger agreed.

Ms. Kolb said she'd like to see the NRPC mapping project completed. She also said that MCC has received complaints about bags of pet waste being left along trails at various MCC properties. HHNP already has kiosk signs directing pet owners to clean up after their pets.

Mr. Gagnon said he'd like to see refreshed information signs near the benches along Lastowka Pond, to give visitors more information about the natural features such as the heron rookery. Other "points of interest" signs would be helpful if there are HHNP features we'd like to highlight. Ms. Kolb said she would look in the HHNP Master Plan to see if such features have already been identified.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned 8:20 p.m. on a motion by Ms. Kolb

Seconded by Mr. Adams

Motion Carried

6-0-0