



# Town of Merrimack, New Hampshire

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## **HORSE HILL NATURE PRESERVE SUBCOMMITTEE OF MERRIMACK CONSERVATION COMMISSION NOVEMBER 29, 2022 MEETING MINUTES**

### **Call to Order -**

The meeting was called to order by subcommittee chair Marc Gagnon at 7:00 p.m.

#### **Members present:**

Marc Gagnon, Chair  
Ellen Kolb, Ex-Officio  
Lynne Wenz  
Paul Lavoie

#### **Members absent:**

Tim Adams  
Christine Nazaka  
Eric Starr

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The subcommittee welcomes new member Paul Lavoie. Mr. Gagnon gave him copies of MCC documents related to Horse Hill for him to look over.

### **Approval of minutes**

The minutes of the September 6, 2022 subcommittee meeting were approved by Mr. Gagnon and Ms. Kolb (motion by Gagnon, seconded by Kolb), the only members present who had attended that meeting, with one correction:  
Page 2, fourth paragraph, lines 1 and 3 of paragraph: replace "Watatic" with "Watanic"

### **New Business**

- **Recap of fall activities:**  
Repair and drainage work on and near bridge on Blodgett Hill trail is complete for the time being. Members of New England Mountain Bike Association (NEMBA) worked on this and other projects. Bowman bridge deck repair is holding up well.  
Marc Gagnon has repaired kiosks at Amherst Road and Old Kings Highway (Watanic Bowmen) entrances. QR codes have been mounted at kiosks and some junctions, enabling trail users to use their smartphones to download trail map. Work to remove invasive plants is ongoing.
- **Fields Farm next steps**

Ms. Kolb reported that in his annual report to the Town Council earlier this month, Conservation Commission Chair Steve Perkins mentioned MCC's concern with the property. We need clarity about property boundaries and access.

If the Nashua Regional Planning Commission (NRPC) is mapping some MCC properties, the detailed trail GPS data for Fields Farm that has been recorded by Paul Lavoie could be helpful. (Those trails were established by users, not MCC.)

Ms. Wenz recalled that Mr. Ireland, who conveyed the Fields Farm property to the Town, wanted passive recreation there, with no motorized vehicles. Mr. Gagnon and Mr. Lavoie recently visited the site, which is less than half a mile from HHNP. They identified two good areas for parking although no formal lot exists now.

In view of the fact that both parcels are town property, Mr. Gagnon suggested posting signs at Fields Farm and HHNP (Amherst Road entrance), each pointing to the other property. People could park at HHNP and walk to the Fields Farm property from there.

**Motion by Mr. Gagnon to recommend to MCC that interim signage be posted at Fields Farm and HHNP (Amherst Road entrance). Mr. Gagnon is willing to make the signs.**

**Seconded by Ms. Wenz**

**Motion Carried**

**4-0-0.**

- **Plans for 2023**

May 8, 2023 will mark twenty years since the Town Council formally voted to name our property the Horse Hill Nature Preserve. Some kind of recognition will be in order.

Trail maintenance will be the #1 priority, keeping trails as clear as possible, repairing bridges as needed, and controlling invasive plants.

Once the Long Pond Spur trail has signage, a bench along the way would be a good addition.

Work to remove invasive plants will continue, as recommended by UNH consultants.

Signage improvements will go on as needed. We are currently awaiting completion of a purchase order (already approved) between the Town and Home Depot for materials to re-set and paint some trail junction posts that are leaning.

We may need to address equestrian damage to some bridges. Mr. Gagnon is considering signage saying "Bridge not safe for horses" in some locations. Equestrian activity has caused some holes in bridges, risking safety of horses as well as people.

We welcome volunteers, and we hope to assist any Scout or other youth volunteer who is looking for a service project benefiting HHNP. A boundary marker project is dormant at this time.

Spaulding Foundation is badly overgrown with vegetation including poison ivy. The foundation is an important historical feature of HHNP. Ms. Wenz will check with the town's historical society to find out if there are any special aspects to the site that we would need to consider before a major cleanup of the area.

Ms. Wenz suggested that a possible Scout project would be an observation spot with a bench for observing and photographing wildlife near Long Pond or overlooking White Pine Swamp.

**Meeting calendar for 2023: subcommittee consensus is to meet on February 7, May 23, September 12, and November 28, 2023.**

**OTHER BUSINESS:**

- **New Long Pond Trail status/next steps**

We have requested via email that MCC ask NRPC to include this trail in future HHNP mapping, and Mr. Lavoie is ready to assist upon request with precise location information. Mr. Gagnon would like to make a sign for the trail saying "Long Pond Trail to Horse Hill Summit."

- **Open action items/status updates**

Re-set leaning junction posts: project has been approved and the purchase order is in progress. Mr. Gagnon will pick up the materials from Home Depot and then do the work, requesting volunteers if needed. Ms. Kolb was asked to remind MCC to ask the Town to re-grade the access road to Old Kings Road parking at HHNP.

During a recent trail work day, Mr. Gagnon noticed that the gate to the Loop Trail from the Amherst Road parking lot is unlocked, and he'd like to find out who has access to that. Ms. Kolb will ask Stefanie in the Community Development office if she has any information about that.

Winter use of trails: Mr. Lavoie said that NEMBA has a "SnowDog" snow groomer and is willing to use it on HHNP trails.

**Motion by Mr. Gagnon to ask MCC to allow NEMBA to do snow grooming on HHNP trails.**

**Seconded by Mr. Lavoie**

**Motion Carried**

**4-0-0.**

**\*Ms. Kolb will bring this before MCC at its December 12 meeting.**

- **Other comments:**

Ms. Wenz noted that the repaired Amherst Road kiosk has no padlock. Consensus was that none is necessary at this time. She suggested that the kiosks include information on

the dates of hunting season; she'll take care of that this year. Mr. Gagnon agreed, and noted that the posted material in the kiosks ought to be refreshed at least annually.

Ms. Wenz reported hearing from a trail user who appreciates the peaceful atmosphere inside HHNP. She also reported that some intentional plantings near the Amherst Road parking lot were being removed, despite the planted areas being demarcated with sticks and string.

**Adjournment -**

**Motion to adjourn the November 29, 2022 HHNP Subcommittee meeting made by Ms. Kolb. Meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.**

**Seconded by Ms. Wenz**

**Motion Carried**

**4-0-0**