



Town of Merrimack, New Hampshire

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Planning - Zoning - Economic Development - Conservation

Horse Hill Nature Preserve Subcommittee (of the Merrimack Conservation Commission)

Approved Meeting Minutes

September 19, 2016

7:00 p.m. Memorial Conference Room

Attendees: Newton Coryell, Roland Roberge, Sharon Hickey, Lynne Wenz, Peter Mikolajczuk, Cindy Glenn, Don Laliberte, Tim Adams, Debra Huffman

Guests: Natalie Maloof, Shawn Smith, Matt Caron

Call to order: Chairman Newt Coryell called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

New Trails: Peter Mikolajczuk presented his proposal for two new segments of single-track trails on the east side of the Horse Hill summit. The Horse Hill Summit Trail is being eroded, and providing alternate routes for mountain bikers will minimize further erosion. Lengthy discussion ensued.

- Debra Huffman stated that she, Tim Adams and Richard Maloon walked the proposed trail segments with Peter. The route included sections on the west side of the existing Summit trail that encroached on Long Pond wildlife, and Peter removed those sections. Debra stated that she will vote to recommend the proposal to the MCC, but she has serious concerns about the number of trails being added to HHNP. She reminded everyone that the guidelines in the Definitive Plan must be respected, and stated that the committee will be looking to the MCC to provide guidance on how to balance the wishes of various user groups.
- Newt Coryell asked if Peter would consider making the trail wider than single track for easier use by users other than bikers. Peter and Matt Caron stated that all users could use a single track. Newt stated that he will vote to recommend the proposal to the MCC, but stated that HHNP cannot sustain yearly additions of new trails. He stated that if there is trail damage, some trails might have to be closed. Newt also stated that the bridge near post 9 will be replaced.
- Lynne Wenz stated that bald eagles, herons, ospreys, cormorants, and many more species depend on Long Pond. She stated that NH Fish and Game has expressed the opinion that, from a wildlife perspective, HHNP already has too many trails.
- Tim Adams expressed concern about the health of the existing trail, since it will remain open to users other than mountain bikers. He stated that water bars should be placed on the old trail to prevent further erosion.

- Don Laliberte asked about the length of the new segments, and Peter estimated that it is about ½ mile. He stated that he leans toward approving the proposal but asked that Peter consider how traffic might be handled, perhaps with recommendations for one-way traffic.
- Shawn Smith (guest) stated that when he started mountain biking on HHNP in 2006 there were no trails. He stated that NEMBA (the mountain biker group) had built all the trails on HHNP, and that he has contributed wood for several projects on HHNP. His son is also a mountain biker and he wants HHNP to provide ample biking trails. Debra informed him that the basic trail system – the Loop and main side trails – were constructed long before 2006, and were not constructed by NEMBA. Debra stated that this is the second time she's heard this from a mountain biker and expressed concern about why NEMBA members believe they built all the HHNP trails.
- Natalie Maloof (guest) stated that her property abuts HHNP and she rode horses out there for 30 years, but now she won't go out there anymore because of the bikers. She described incidents of biker/horse interactions, one of which caused the horses to rear and the riders to be thrown. Debra stated that several dog walkers have told her that they won't walk their dogs on HHNP anymore because of interactions with mountain bikers. Matt Caron stated that NEMBA has signs advising bikers of the trail rules for encounters with horses and other users. Peter will put up these signs at strategic places on the trails.
- Matt Caron stated that with the parking lot expansion there will be more mountain bikers using the property, putting more bike traffic on the exiting trails. More trails helps spread out the traffic, making the trails safer.

Peter made a motion to send the trail proposal to the MCC with the committee's recommendation to approve, the motion was seconded by Roland Roberge, and the motion passed with a unanimous vote.

Unauthorized Trails: Debra Huffman stated that she has seen one unauthorized trail on HHNP and she has been told about another. She stated that this could become a serious issue and the committee needs to think about how to handle this. It was stated that Grater Woods has had the same problem. Lynne Wenz stated that in Milford they put up a sign informing users that cutting unauthorized trails is prohibited. General discussion ensued, and it was determined that the MCC will have to consider how this should be handled uniformly on all MCC-managed properties.

Action Plan for Trail Maintenance: Peter Mikolajczuk stated that the power lines near posts 6 and 7 need to be trimmed. Newt Coryell stated that John Lastowka has a machine that he will let the committee borrow to do the work. Peter and Newt will work on this project.

Cindy Glenn stated that the MCC is asking the town to do some maintenance tasks and asked that the committee consider sending suggestions to the MCC for town assistance. Newt stated that there is a tree on Old Kings Highway that he has talked to Lori at the town about, and the town will handle it. Newt stated that he mows around the parking lot about twice per year, so the town does not have to do that. The town does plow the parking lot. There are not any other tasks that HHNP would need town assistance with at present. Debra advised using caution when asking the town to do maintenance on MCC-managed properties. Town staff is funded by taxpayer dollars, and taxpayers should not be expected to fund trail maintenance any more than necessary. If users aren't willing to maintain their own trails then in her opinion they should lose the right to have trails.

Scout Project at the Spalding Foundation: Peter Mikolajczuk reported that Blake's plans are still in progress. Peter suggested that Blake not make a presentation to the HHNP committee and go directly to the MCC, but various committee members advised against this. The HHNP committee can anticipate many of the MCC's questions, and this is a good way for the scout to 'shake out' his plans, so when he goes to the MCC the presentation will go more smoothly.

Tree Trimming: Newt Coryell stated that the apple and white walnut trees are again in need of pruning. The crowns need work, so the committee can't do the work themselves. He stated that Bob McCabe trimmed them last time, and Newt had Bob take a look at them again. Bob quoted \$500 for ½ day's work. He also suggests cutting three pines for \$100, making a total quote of \$600. Newt suggested that the town can chip up the trimmings to use around the parking lot. Newt gave the quote to Cindy who will pass it to the MCC.

Elections: Roland Roberge nominated Newt Coryell for Chairman; Cindy Glenn nominated Peter Mikolajczuk for Chairman. Discussion ensued. It was generally agreed that new people need to be encouraged to step into leadership roles, but several committee members expressed concern that Peter has not been involved with HHNP for very long and may not be familiar with all of the mandates of the Definitive Plan and requirements of the position. It was generally agreed that the committee should set up a process for new people to become prepared to take over leadership. Lynne Wenz and Don Laliberte suggested that Peter consider taking the Vice Chairman position. The vote for Newt to retain the Chairman position was 4 in favor (Roland, Lynne, Don, Debra), 2 opposed (Cindy, Peter), and 1 abstaining (Newt).

Cindy Glenn nominated Peter for Vice Chairman; Newt nominated Roland Roberge for Vice Chairman. Discussion ensued. It was generally agreed that the Vice Chairman role is a good way to train someone to eventually take over as Chairman, but it was also acknowledged that Roland has done an excellent job and serves the committee well in that role. He is physically present on HHNP several times every day and keeps a close eye on the property. His having an official title is useful when he has to speak with people about the rules. After much debate and discussion, Don Laliberte made a motion, with a second by Sharon Hickey, to have Cindy Glenn ask the MCC if they would approve two Vice Chairmen for this year, both Roland and Peter. The motion carried by a vote of 5-2-0. On a motion by Sharon Hickey, with a second from Don Laliberte, the committee voted 7-0-0 to table the vote on Vice Chairman until they hear from the MCC.

Sharon Hickey volunteered to take over the Secretary role, and the committee gratefully accepted her offer.

Approval of Minutes: The minutes of July 11, 2016, were approved as presented by a unanimous vote.

Comments from Guests: Natalie Maloof stated that she was approached by a beaver trapper about trapping on HHNP. She told him he did not have permission. Newt stated that trappers need permission from the MCC. Natalie also asked about tree stands and the committee reviewed the rules, including the need for the hunter's name and contact information on a stand. Newt offered to look at any stands Natalie was aware of.

Comments from Members:

Don Laliberte asked if Cindy got the CD with the map and coordinates. She did and gave it to Peter, who said it has the same data as the map Don already has. Don also asked about the plans to have the NRPC take over the map. Matt Caron stated that NRPC is already working on it. Don also suggested scheduling another work day to continue marking boundaries. He will send an e-mail with some proposed dates. He further suggested that the committee look again at the beaver dam by the Watson overlook and consider options.

Tim Adams stated that he has completed placing blue markers on the Outer Ledges trail. Tim also stated that the beaver are working on a big birch tree near the Watson overlook and when it falls it will block the trail. Tim further stated that he will schedule another walk, coordinated with the Parks and Recreation department. He will check that it is added to the Merrimack website.

Lynne Wenz stated that Greg Kennedy is still selling his property that abuts HHNP and might be willing to take a reduced offer. She hoped the MCC might consider it. Lynne also stated that she spoke with Audubon and they can't schedule the program for children this year, but they can schedule a "pond probe" hike for a fee of \$200. The committee agreed that this would be a very interesting and worthwhile event for the community. Cindy will bring the idea to the MCC.

Cindy Glenn stated that the memorial bench has been installed in the parking lot, and it looks good. Cindy also stated that the MCC is trying to get a re-planting plan for the Wasserman Heights encroachment.

Roland Roberge stated that he met a man from Israel walking on HHNP, and that is the visitor from the farthest away that he has met on HHNP so far. He's always amazed at the wide range of visitors he meets.

Newt and Roland expressed concern about a recent event on HHNP involving a large number of bikers. The event coordinator told Newt that he was given permission by Matt Caron. Matt stated that there were two events and he had only been involved in one of them, and he had informed MCC Chairman Tim Tenhave about the event in advance. Newt and Roland stated that it would have been courteous for Matt to tell the HHNP committee about such a large event so they could have posted it in the kiosk so people would have known that there would be a large crowd of bikers on the trails that day. They requested that in the future Matt inform the committee of large events, as a matter of courtesy. Matt agreed.

Next Meeting: The next scheduled meeting will be held on October 10th.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 9:20 p.m.