

Concord Conservation Commission

Trails Subcommittee Meeting

December 11, 2019

The Concord Conservation Commission's Trails Subcommittee met at 5:15 pm on December 11, 2019 in the second floor conference room in City Hall, 41 Green St.

Attendees: Rob Knight, Chairperson; Tim Pifer, Vice Chair; Gail Page, Secretary; Greg Mannesto, Rob Talmadge, Fran Philippe, Mike Schowalter; Jeff Lewis, Conservation Commission representative; Ron Klemarczyk, Consultant Forester;

Absent: Rik Van Riel (alt.); David Ross (alt.)

Staff: Beth Fenstermacher, Assistant City Planner

Guests: Jim Owers, Conservation Commission Vice Chair; Megan MacMullin; Rebecca Ross; CNHRPC representatives Craig Tufts and Stephanie Alexander

1. Minutes: The committee approved the November minutes as written.
2. Community Trail Walks:
 - Gail Page will lead the December walk at the Forest Society trails in East Concord
 - On January 25th Fran Philippe will lead a walk at Audubon Society and WEFT trails
 - David Ross will lead the OLLI hike/snowshoe at Carter Hill on February 26th
 - On February 15th a hike or snowshoe will be led by Rob Knight, location TBD
3. Trail Maintenance and Reporting:
 - Ron K. has again re-closed the discontinued section of the Upper Trail section that borders a vernal pool. He will put up a sign explaining the reason for rerouting the trail in hopes that will stop the use of the discontinued trail section.
 - Downed trees were removed by Ron K at Riley and Contoocook River Park.
 - Rob Knight removed one tree at WEFT.
 - The city has removed many trees in Healey Park along Rt. 93 opening a view of the Merrimack River. Homeless camps are also more visible.
 - Terrill Park is to get an upgraded parking lot, a relocation of the dog park and phase one of the Greenway Trail.
 - The Swope-Winant Connector has a downed tree that can be easily stepped over for now.
4. Backwoods Proposed Trail

Question: Do we create an official trail through this property?

Rob Knight presented a possible route for a loop trail and discussed terrain features and existence of a historical cart path. Some existing rogue trails could become part of a trail system. The cart path is partly on private property so that portion will need to be bypassed. There is an old trail at the NW corner where a gate and a sign could prevent straying onto an abutting private field. Any trail near there should be far enough in the woods to protect the abutter's privacy.

In reviewing our criteria for new trails we agreed that, as positives, a Backwoods loop would provide a link to other city trails and expand the heavily used Winant Park trail network. The property was acquired for the purpose of protecting public access to an area with heavy informal use. And it is likely to be well used and supported as a way of reducing confusion in an area of confusing informal trails. On the other hand, we need to consider the adequacy of the Winant parking lot and the need for a 12 foot bridge over a wet area.

A motion was made, seconded and passed to proceed with the trail project, subject to approval of the Conservation Commission. Upon their approval, the next step will be for Ron K to flag a proposed route.

5. Sub-committee Reappointments:

Members Gail Page, Greg Mannesto and Rik Van Riel (alt) are willing and ready to continue as members of the sub-committee. They were approved for a second three-year term.

6. Trails Master Plan:

Craig Tufts and Stephanie Alexander of the Central New Hampshire Regional Planning Commission (CNHRPC) joined the meeting to discuss a new Trails Master Plan currently being prepared. It is due to be completed by May 31st, 2020. They are looking for input from the public, city staff, this sub-committee and the Conservation Commission. CNHRPC will be conducting public outreach and will be creating a survey to be released in January. In addition, the initial public hearing to solicit feedback will be held at the end of January. The goal is to determine the community's vision for how trails benefit the town's residents, how the trails can be networked where desired, and what resources are needed for trail maintenance and education of the public and city staff. Other questions the plan should answer include: As trail system expands and connects, how will rules for their use be enforced? Is there need of a ranger, or other personnel? It was also suggested that CNHRPC reach out to other towns nearby, especially where trails cross town lines. A separate worksession including members of the Conservation Commission and Trails subcommittee will be scheduled to discuss the plan. Future meetings of this sub-committee will take up this topic again.

Rob Talmadge raised concern over the continuing disappearance of open land set aside for wildlife and hunting and recommended that CNHRPC reach out to other groups that have interests in protection of areas for wildlife and hunting.

Meeting adjourned at 6:40 pm.

The next meeting will be held on January 8th at 5:15 pm in the second floor conference room in City Hall.

Respectfully submitted,
Gail Page, recording secretary