

Conservation Commission Trails Subcommittee

April 10, 2024

City Hall, 2nd Fl Conference Rm, 41 Green St

Present: Members Mark Cheever, Andrew Gould, Fran Philippe (Chair), Rebecca Ross, Rik van Riel. Staff Ron Klemarczyk (Consultant Forester), Carl Matson (Trails Ranger), AnneMarie Skinner (Acting City Planner)

Absent: Members Aaron Monier (Secretary), Gail Page

Guests: Jim Graham, Kris Tardiff (Conservation Commission Chair)

1. Meeting called to order at 5:16 p.m.
The newest member, Andrew Gould, was introduced. Mr. Gould stated he is a trails user and familiar with system, using the trails for bicycling, running, snowshoeing, and dog walking.
2. Approval of minutes March 13, 2024
Several typos were noted. Cheever moved, Gould seconded to approve minutes. Motion passed with four in favor, one abstention.
3. New Trail Proposal for northerly bypass at discontinued District 5 Rd
Kris Tardiff, chair of the Conservation Commission was present to discuss the northerly bypass for the group. Rebecca Ross made comments throughout the discussion specifically as a member of the public and not as a member of the subcommittee, due to her conflict of interest (the Woodards are her parents, and she also owns contiguous land). Ms. Tardiff noted that the City purchased a portion of Country Hill Estates in 2019. Most of the land is on the northerly side of the discontinued District 5 Rd.

Rebecca Ross noted that the District 5 Rd is discontinued and asked for it to be noted that the land was formerly a road that has been since discontinued.

Ms. Tardiff stated that there was a past issue that was resolved through a settlement agreement with the Woodards. Ms Tardiff read the specific portion of the settlement agreement that outlines the requirement for the northerly bypass. It reads: "The City shall, through the Concord Conservation Commission using its ordinary trail planning procedures, establish a formal City trail northerly of the stone wall along the northerly sidelines of the discontinued section of the District No. 5 Road, to create an effective bypass of the discontinued portion of the district No. 5 Road abutting the Woodard Property in order to provide access to City owned land. Upon construction of the trail identified in Paragraph 5, the City shall install and maintain signs at (a) the entrance of the discontinued road, and (b) sufficiently prior to the westerly boundary of the Woodard Property, notifying the general public and others of the availability of the trail."

It was noted that the parcel has high conservation values and also now has a timber management plan.

The first stage is to identify a route for the bypass and work with the abutters to identify the location.

The group asked if there was a timeline for establishment of the northerly bypass. Ms. Tardiff stated there is no specific timeline in the agreement, but the process needs to be started. The Conservation Commission is looking at the end use of the property and whether to maintain as a preserve or as managed land. This is being considered for wetland, wildlife, and timber values, knowing that public access is required for the property as a condition of the grants. The level of public access is an open question.

Chair Philippe asked Ms. Tardiff to repeat the language from the settlement agreement.

Rebecca Ross, speaking as private citizen and not as a member of the subcommittee, stated that the land between the stone walls is what was in dispute. Because the house is so close to the stone wall there is a privacy concern. A site visit will show the reason why this bypass needs to be done.

Ms. Ross further added that privacy, quiet, and enjoyment are the reasons why the Woodards are looking into this. It's hard to ensure people accessing City lands will stay on the road to avoid private land. It was noted that the Woodards and Rosses were not compensated as part of the fee transfer – that was another party.

Going north of the stone wall is a better option from an interest point of view. The right-of-way is not down the center.

In looking at the map, Ms. Tardiff and Ron Klemarczyk noted that a trail would ideally avoid the wetland/marsh areas that are directly adjacent to the stone wall.

Mr. Klemarczyk noted an old farm road and former farm land was located here, and logging there led to erosion such that the old road is now more of a canal.

Connectivity was emphasized as part of this – and noted that a trail in this area could link a number of trail systems in the area. Some of the trails here have a lot of wet areas that may need fortification.

As a next step and following the trails checklist process, a site walk is recommended by the Conservation Commission.

Members of the Conservation Commission would like to join. Abutters would like to join.

Mark Cheever moved, and Rik van Riel seconded, for Mark Cheever to be the designated project manager, with a site walk on Monday, April 22, 2024, beginning at 4:30 p.m., that is open to the public. All approved with Rebecca Ross recusing herself from the vote.

It was noted that there is parking available on the road east of the “no parking” signs at the end of the western end of District 5 Rd.

Chair Philippe thanked Ms. Tardiff and the members for a good discussion.

4. Trails Maintenance and Reporting

Ron Klemarczyk noted that a recent storm has done a lot of damage on trails with blowdowns. Many of these have been corrected, others still expected to be reported. Current wet trail conditions are delaying some in being cut down.

Mr. Klemarczyk reported his activities as follows: removed a large tree from Russell Martin park; installed a new camera at Currier Rd trailhead; removed trees at Leightinen Park, O'Reilly-Fleetham, Swope Winant Connector, Jim Hill Riverwalk, and Knight-Morono Trail near Clark Street; notified General Services through city notification for the larger/challenging trees; performed work at Oak Hill, including the parking lot, noting that people throwing branches in the drainage ditch is not helpful as was done at O'Reilly Lp.

Mr. Klemarczyk noted that it's mud season, but the trails are still getting use due to warm weather.

Chair Philippe asked if mud season signs could be installed. Carl Matson noted that this information was at kiosks. Mr. Matson said he'd have to check the box of signage to see if we had mud season signs.

AnneMarie Skinner noted that if he has printing needs she can help with that.

Chair Philippe asked whether we could address people who are doing bandit maintenance. Ideal if these folks can report, but noted the challenges of this.

Carl Matson's Report

Mr. Matson stated he has been out on the trails, following Mr. Klemarczyk's work.

Ms. Skinner read from Mr. Matson's report that he addressed issues with trash/litter at various parking lots and public spaces and that he is looking to add a camera for the Oak Hill parking lot. He is hoping to get one on loan from New Hampshire Fish and Game.

It was noted that every trail has a steward, with the exception of O'Reilly-Fleetham. Ms. Skinner noted that the stewards only go out twice a year, spring and fall.

5. Review Documents

Finalize 2024 Goals

There was discussion about having Goals, and add Projects as part of those goals.

Add "and promote best land management practices" to the invasives species goals.

Regarding trail walks, ensure that walk leaders are trained and appropriate to lead others in public hike settings.

Consolidate 5 & 6 into "install interpretive sign updates on city trails."

Old Winter recreation area at Carter Hill.

Cellar holes at Curtisville Rd and Frost Rd.

Amend APT to "Identify opportunities to increase access to trails through All Persons Trails in Concord."

It was questioned whether to add "add potential new trails" to the 2024 goals. This was noted to be the purview of the Conservation Committee; although it was noted that this shift was recent

and historically Trails Subcommittee did do the proposing, as well as the evaluating and project management.

6. Review Documents

Procedure for Approving a New Trail or Trail Network (work continued from previous meeting)

7 no change

8 add “for development” before Conservation Commission at the end

9 no change

10 noted that the Conservation Commission always requires a public hearing for the trail, so whether to move forward on a public hearing.

Preliminary: “The Conservation Commission reviews the recommendation at a regular meeting and determines whether or not to move forward and schedule a public hearing.”

Turn this into #11: Y/N on public hearing: “A public hearing is held to receive information on the proposal from the public.”

#12: The Conservation Commission deliberates and then votes whether or not to approve the trail or take any other relevant action. The project manager attends to provide information.”

Discussion was held on the merits of whether we have a duty to inform abutters to a project: Pros: best practice for engaging local folks who are impacted by the trail. Cons: unsure about legal liabilities and obligations, worry about overly bureaucratic nature of this. A next step was decided to ask for input for the City Solicitor. (AnneMarie to do)

7. Other

Chair Philippe asked Conservation Commission Chair Tardiff whether the “note” section at the top should be included. It was noted that best practice should be to follow all steps and if steps are omitted then they should be communicated to the Conservation Commission as the trail proposed is presented.

There is an invasive species course at the local UU church on May 30, 2024, by Dana Sansom.

Chair Philippe thanked members for their work.

8. Adjourn

Rebecca Ross moved to adjourn, Rik van Riel second, unanimously approved. (time not recorded)

Respectfully submitted,
Mark Cheever