

Fremont Conservation Commission  
Fremont Town Hall  
Fremont, NH

July 16<sup>th</sup>, 2017  
8:00 AM

Special Meeting Minutes

Present: Chairman Leanne Miner, members Bill Knee, Cindy Crane, Open Space Chairman Dennis Howland, and Mary Howland

- I. CALL TO ORDER – Leanne Miner called the meeting to order at 8:05 AM
- II. THUNDER ROAD SPECIAL EXCEPTION - Bill Knee and Cindy Crane attended a joint ZBA/ Conservation site visit. After reviewing the site plan and a picture taken of the area where the proposed driveway would cross the wetland, the Commission agreed the wetland impact would be minimal at the site proposed for the driveway crossing and to the adjacent wetlands. Chair Leanne Minor agreed to draft a comment sheet to the ZBA reflecting the Commission's position.
- III. OAK RIDGE - SOUTH WALK  
The purpose for the hike was to assess whether the trails in Oak Ridge - South could be used for our first attempt at developing an interpretive trail.

*A. Rail Trail To Ridge Trail*

The group began the walk at the Town Library and headed toward the Rail Trail following it toward Ridge Trail in the Oak Ridge-South Town Forest. The group noted the following possible interpretive features: (1) The Railroad Depot and Baggage Building; (2) The tracks from the Fremont Depot to the Epping Depot. Noting that they were kept open several years after the closing of the line from Hudson to Fremont in order to accommodate the Spaulding and Frost Cooperage freight; (3) The Rail Trail though the Spruce Swamp ecosystem is closed to ATV and Snowmobile traffic when the trail isn't snow covered to protect this fragile and exemplary system of wetlands; (4) A vernal pool on School District property on the Eastern side of the Trail; (5) An extensive Cattail Marsh along the western side of the Trail; (6) An eroded embankment offering a soil profile of an esker; (7) A Laurel - Leatherleaf bog blanketed with Sheep Laurel and Leatherleaf shrubs whose roots are intertwined in a carpet of Sphagnum moss. The bog is classically surrounded by a narrow moat. Insectivorous plants like Pitch Plants and Sundew can be found among the shrubs of the bog.

*B. Ridge Trail To The Marsh Trail*

The group left the Rail Trail where meets the Ridge Trail and followed the Trail as it loops to the South and intersects with the Marsh Trail. The group noted the following possible interpretive features: (1) The Trail runs along the top of an Esker as it rises between two Blueberry-Winterberry wetlands; (2) A dip in the Trail suggests a place where the esker was breached by impounded water escaping toward the main body of the "Swamp" which was most likely a shallow lake following the retreat of the last continental glacier; (3) The ridge is populated with a stand of Eastern Hemlock.

*C. Marsh Trail To Ridge Trail*

The group left the Ridge Trail where it intersects the Marsh Trail and followed it to a South-facing overlook of the Cattail Marsh we passed along the Rail Trail. The group noted the following possible interpretive features: (1) The overlook would make a good location to watch the Spring and Fall bird migration The view would need to be opened up by the removal a few trees down the slope. The Ija Mahoney gift to the Commission could be used to fund construction

of a platform with rails and built in benches. The cost of the project would need to be estimated for materials and labor; (2) From the Overlook the Trail descends to a more level forest floor with an open canopy. The open forest canopy allows in more sunlight resulting in a greater diversity of plants on the forest floor. The forest floor is carpeted with an abundance lowbush blueberries and a variety of ferns and wildflowers. This area would make a good place to interpret the forest floor and its trees; (3) The Trail leads to a beaver pond and follows its northern edge. Where the pond and Trail first meet there is an active beaver lodge and dam. The site would make a good location for an observation blind. In addition to the beaver lodge and dam, the pond supports a variety of emergent and submerged plants including waterlilies. It also has numerous snags that could be used to mount black duck nesting boxes. Painted and Blanding turtles have been seen in and around the pond. This would allow of the interpretation of a State recognized Species of Concern and information on the NHF&G turtle siting program; (4) It was noted that the Trail along the edge of the pond needs to carefully defined and that the vegetation along its edges needs to be left undisturbed; (5) The trail rises steeply to rejoin the Ridge Trail. A small section of trail in this area needs to be stabilized and leveled to provide better footing and prevent soil erosion.

#### *D. Ridge Trail to Tavern Road*

The group followed Ridge Trail as it descends to Tavern Road and passed through a break in a large Pine tree that acts as an entrance/exit from the Trail. To the South of this Tavern Road leads to the Oak Ridge-South Parking Area and Kiosk. The accessibility of this area to school groups for field trips was briefly discussed.

#### *E. Tavern Road To Puddle Bypass To Ridge Trail To Rail Trail*

The group followed the Road toward the North where it intersects with the Puddle Bypass Trail. The Puddle Bypass Trail ascends steeply to rejoin Ridge Trail. Here Ridge Trail continues to climb along an old Town Road on top of a large esker climbing to an elevation of 263 feet. The trail is topped by a stand of Eastern Hemlock and its slopes drop off sharply from 60 to 80 feet to Scrub-Shrub wetlands below. From this high point the trail gradually descends toward the Rail Trail where the group first left it.

#### *F. Rail Trail To Town Library*

The group returned to the Town Library along the Rail Trail. The group concluded the Oak Ridge-South Trail System had more that enough to interpret for our first attempt at developing an interpretative trail. It was further noted that the interpretive trail could turn out to be an educational resource for both Ellis School and our local Cub and Boy Scout Troops, especially if the elements of earning a scouting badge can be incorporated in the interpretive trail description.

VI. NEXT REGULAR MEETING DATE : August 7, 2017

VII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 10 :32 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bill Knee  
Recording Secretary