

**MINUTES OF SELECTMEN'S MEETING
TOWN OF GORHAM
MONDAY, APRIL 25, 2016 7:00 PM
TOWN HALL MEDALLION OPERA HOUSE**

Gorham Selectmen present: Grace LaPierre, Terry Oliver, Patrick Lefebvre

Also present: Robin Frost, Town Manager; Commissioner Jeff Rose, NH DRED, Chris Gamache, Chief, Bureau of Trails.

1. Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Lapierre at 7:06 pm.

Chairman LaPierre explained how this meeting will be run. She will allow public comments after the Board members have a chance to speak and ask questions. Each person wanting to speak during public comments would be allowed 2 minutes.

2. Appointments:

a) Commissioner Jeff Rose, NH DRED – Commissioner Rose was present at the request of the Board of Selectmen to speak about the portion of the rail trail between the public parking lot on Route 2 and Jimtown Road.

Chairman LaPierre stated that there are other locations where trails have been opened by the state; citing Bangor Street to the Town & Country, the crossing of Route 16 to Cascade Flats Road for Mary's Pizza and a trail connecting Absolute Power. Why were those trails opened and not this one? It is only 2355' long and connects a business. Is this business not big enough to warrant a special trail permit like the others cited previously?

Commissioner Rose thanked the Board for the invitation to come and speak with them. He went through the chronology of the past couple of years when roads and more trails were opened up to OHRV use. His agency does quite a bit to promote OHRV's and recognizes the benefit to the region as well as the economic successes. Because this has grown rapidly, he feels there needs to be a thoughtful approach to next wave of growth. We have come a long way in a short time. Why does the Board think a modest amount of the trail needs to be open? He feels each request needs to be examined on its individual merits.

Chairman LaPierre stated that snowmobilers use trail bed 24/7; there is no time limit. She said that there are buffers along the trail on each side.

Selectman Lefebvre said that opening Cascade Flats has helped to sell houses. There are a few properties that had been on the market for quite some time which have recently sold due to the access to the trail system.

Commissioner Rose stated that New Hampshire is the only state in the country where symbiotic departments are together. This State is trying to run a system that provides a variety of

opportunities for the varied interests of the citizens and visitors.

Selectman Oliver stated that he sees this as a safety issue. The parking lot gets full very quickly and then people tend to park along the road. If the residents of Jimtown Road and the surrounding streets were able to access the trail system from their properties, it would cut down on the number of trucks and trailers that need parking.

Commissioner Rose agrees that safety is utmost in dealing with these issues.

Public Comment:

Commissioner Rose wanted to make sure that all in attendance were aware that this was not a formal Public Hearing, but a public meeting where information could be shared.

Ray Bergeron spoke about his new role in the Presidential OHRV Club. He said that the users want to police themselves and earn the support of the people who think opening the trail would be a very bad decision.

Mike Pike said that he is all about safety and it is unsafe to allow these motorized vehicles on the same trails as bicyclists. There are lots of young families bicycling on that piece of the trail.

Eric Cornish said that he rides responsibly with his family. His machine is a four seater and covers all the EPA requirements, including noise. He feels that everyone else in Town has access to the trail system, why can't he?

Wally Corrigan Jr. had some suggestions for the hikers and bikers for trail parking. They could open some parking closer off Jimtown Road.

Abby Evankow stated that the parking lot on Route 2 is inadequate for the needs now.

Skid Baillargeon said that these OHRV's and bicycles can coexist. It is far more dangerous to ride bicycles on the main highways than it is on the trails.

Rene Boutin agrees that all users of the trails can coexist and we need to police and report the users who aren't following the laws.

Diane Bouthot said that the OHRV's are noisy and stop right next to her bedroom window.

Ray Bergeron said that there are new members in the OHRV Club with new ideas and energy. They want to make this work for everyone.

Jeff Tennis said that there needs to be more enforcement of the speed limits.

Liz Jackson stated that what the OHRV community is asking for doesn't seem like a lot except when you listen to people who live near the trail in question. She appreciates what Ray Bergeron is saying about policing themselves. She suggests seeing how it goes for a summer. She further

asked, How can you listen to the abutters speak to their frustration with noise and dust, etc. and then just open the trails and promote this misery?

Another member of the audience said that there are many OHRVers who are not courteous, mostly from out of town.

Paul Nault reiterated that speed is a problem and we need to police our own. We need to get out on the trails and work on it.

Steve Emerson realizes that there are problems with people from out of town. He can see the trail from his house, but can't ride on it. Could this small piece of the trail be signed for local traffic only?

Eric Cornish asked why the State portion of Jimtown Road was opened with no access. Chris Gamache that NH DOT was asked about opening their portion of Jimtown Road when the Town was considering opening Crestwood Drive. The State approved their portion and the Town did not approve opening Crestwood Drive.

An audience member said that maybe a gate would help and give the Jimtown Road residents a key to it. People just laugh at him when he asks them to stop revving their machines.

Ray Bergeron said that the Trail Patrol program needs to be expanded. We need to use the bad actors as an example.

Preston Baillargeon asked if there was anywhere we could put a parking lot to allow people to park away from the residences?

Keith Roberge said that he needs the trail open to run his business. Fair is fair. DRED holds the permit for the Town & Country trail and the one at Absolute Power. We support DRED with the OHRV registrations, etc. Bicyclists and hikers use the trail and don't pay anything for their use.

Mr. Bergeron(from Crestwood Drive) said he felt like they hadn't been heard in the past and the Board of Selectmen made a decision without really listening to them.

Abby Evankow thinks that hikers and other users of the trail should pay something for that use.

Selectman Lefebvre stated that there needs to be more money allocated for policing.

Commissioner Rose agrees that enforcement is a critical component. There are always bad actors. His agency is promoting Parks and Recreation and have to enforce with smiles and handshakes. There are only 9 forest rangers and they are out straight with wildfires. He would like to ask the legislature to increase funding for enforcement.

Chief PJ Cyr said that there should be more money for an increased enforcement presence. He jokingly/not jokingly suggested that everyone participate in the next budget process and support an increase in his budget for added enforcement. He also plugged his grant-funded pole-

mounted speed displays that will be on either end of Route 2 as it travels through Gorham. He is just waiting for DOT approval.

Henry Sanschagrín stated that he is the very proud president of the Presidential OHRV Club. He has a great group of people. All they want is a fair playing field like everyone else who wants to use the trails. He admonished Mike Pike for jumping in front of OHRV's.

Wally Corrigan, Jr. said that his family has land behind the Irving Station on Main Street and perhaps something could be worked out for a larger parking area there.

Annie Evankow said that people are concerned about there being more than just local traffic, if this portion of the rail trail is opened. She feels that OHRV's can just use existing open trails.

Paul Nault stated that this has grown very fast and with that always comes growing pains.

Jackie Tetreault works for a local business and the OHRV opportunities have been a good thing for local businesses. She agrees that people drive too fast, but she is always careful to tell the customers to respect the trails and the rules.

Chairman LaPierre closed public comments. She stated that the board is anxious to know what his findings are.

The meeting adjourned at 8:25 pm.

REVIEWED AND APPROVED:

Grace LaPierre

Terry Oliver

Patrick Lefebvre