

Hanover Conservation Commission Trails Committee Minutes, May 12, 2015

Present: Ron Bailey, Ed Chamberlain, Tom Linell, Doug McIlroy, Hugh Mellert, Bill Mlacak, John Taylor

Vistors: Bob Russell, Steve Lubrano, Paul Gagnon

Cliffside Trail

Bob Russell of the Occom Ridge Neighborhood Association invited the committee to address the Association meeting, May 19, to discuss the possible renovation of the Cliffside Trail, which crosses twenty properties in the neighborhood. Mlacak will represent the committee. Russell said the trail has sometimes brought abuse, such as littering and theft, to owners' waterfront facilities. This makes some residents leery of upgrading the trail.

Chamberlain and Mlacak talked of the goal of a continuous riverside path all the way to Wilson's landing. McIlroy said Dartmouth is amenable to allowing the trail to extend to Kendal. Mlacak cited a hope that continuation through Kendal might be linked to Kendal's expansion plans. [Scribe's note: later in the day the town voted to defeat a zoning amendment to enable the expansion. Publicly accessible land reaches from opposite Kendal to Wilson's landing.]

Slade Brook bridge

McIlroy said the committee wants to be prepared to apply for a grant from the NH Recreational Trails Program in the fall should the usual federal funds be appropriated this year. The purpose would be to build a foot bridge at the site of a long-collapsed farm bridge on the Bridle Trail in the Huntington Hill Farm Wildlife Management Area. Owner Steve Lubrano expressed support for the project and offered to have nearby hemlocks cut for stringers.

Taylor, who had suggested the hemlocks, described alternatives, particularly a truss bridge that was built by volunteers in Enfield. He also described methods to protect log stringers from rot, and described decking options: rough-cut hemlock and pressure-treated lumber. Mlacak asked about Trex, which is very long-lived. Taylor said it needs more closely spaced stringers; Chamberlain said it is quite heavy; and Lubrano said he prefers natural materials. Mellert, who had spearheaded the installation of another foot bridge downstream in 2000 with support from the same grant program, will assess needs in more detail.

Ridge Trail

Serendipitously at the UNH-sponsored Saving Special Places conference, Chamberlain met Paul Gagnon, the Forest Society's monitor for the Faulkner easement on Moose Mountain. Gagnon attended the committee meeting and offered to share boundary data to

determine exactly what properties the Ridge Trail traverses. This is an important first step among actions to secure the persistence of the trail. The second step will be to apply for a grant from the Quabbin to Cardigan Partnership to identify, contact, and negotiate with owners about a viable permanently protected route. That grant, involving Hanover, Enfield, and possibly Lebanon would be coordinated by the Trails Alliance. Cosponsorship by the Hanover Conservancy is expected, and Gagnon's participation signals cooperation by the Forest Society.

Taylor saw this as a step toward the long-term dream of an Upper Valley outer loop trail. The Ridge Trail connects with the AT to the north and comes within a quarter mile of the Northern Rail Trail to the south. Gagnon said that while the central purpose of the Partnership is landscape-scale conservation, trails provide the personal experience that binds the public to the land.

Continuation of the meeting

Due to the unusual amount of business the committee could not cover the whole agenda in the allotted time. A continuation was scheduled for May 19.