



# Notes

## Norwich Trails volunteers monthly meeting

7 pm, March 3, 2021

**Zoom:** <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81843241733>

### Attendees:

*Norwich Trails Committee members present:* Cody Williams *Absent:* Craig Layne and David Hubbard

*Volunteers and members of the public:* Nick Krembs (facilitator), Stephen Flanders (scribe), Jim Faughnan, Bob Fiskin, Elisabeth Hammer, John McCormick, Sean Ogle, Gerry Plummer, Brie Swenson

### AGENDA

A quorum of the Norwich Trails Committee was not present during this meeting, which came to order at 7 pm as a meeting of Norwich Trails volunteers.

1. *Approval of agenda*—Krembs and Flanders summarized the agenda. There were no suggested changes.
2. *Comments from those present*—Krembs invited comments about items not on the agenda. Two topics were discussed:
  - Elisabeth Hammer introduced herself.
  - Sean Ogle talked about the Upper Valley Trails Alliance activities. He reported that Gile Mountain Trail winter user numbers are the lowest on record. The Summer 2020 usage was up 10%. Other years were consistent over time. He proposed moving the counter closer to the beginning of the trail, mounted on a post to assure better accuracy of count. The UVTA May do a summer camp and will lead spring work crews.
3. *Report on fund balances available for trails*—Flanders reported that there appeared to be remaining authorized balances, as reported in February and as follows:
  - For FY 2020-21 in the Brown Schoolhouse Road project of \$4.3K out of the \$80K authorized by town meeting vote.
  - The town financial summary for December 2020, showed a balance of \$5121.90, much of which is earmarked for a scoping study of the Gile Mountain parking lot expansion.
  - Women's Club funds for the Heyl Trail bog bridge are believed to be fully expended, there is reportedly an approximately \$700 balance to be applied to the improvement of the Lower Ballard Trail. These funds must be invoiced by April 1 or be re-applied for.
4. *Report Winter Hikes Zoom Talk*—Plummer summarized the event and made reference to its link at <https://norwichtrails.org/winter-hiking-on-norwich-trails/>. He reported that the Norwich Historical Society-sponsored event had 87 registrants and 78 attendees. Proceeds from the series benefit local eateries.

## Trail infrastructure

5. *Reports on recent trail blockages and actions taken or planned*—There were no major issues reported. Faughnan reported good winter use on trails.
6. *Planning contract work on Lower Ballard Trail*— It was agreed that volunteers should prepare the following information for discussion in April:
  - a. Date for site visit
  - b. Scope of work
  - c. Budget
  - d. Possible contractors
7. *Trail information standards*—Williams summarized the proposed guidelines, as described in the Agenda material.
  - Volunteers for the group were: Gerry Plummer, Cody Williams, Peter Griggs, Kathy Redpath, Jim Faughnan, Steve Flanders, John McCormick.
  - He summarized the “living document”, which is intended to be an evolving set of guidelines, as covering:
    - Kiosks, in a large format for parking areas and a small format for road-side trailheads, each having a one-piece information format, printed on durable material.
    - Signage, at trail intersections with mileage shown to destinations.
    - Markers, blue 2 x 6 plastic
    - Other informational icon markers, regarding authorized use.
    - Road signage, using standard formats
  - Discussion revolved around whether more steps were needed and how and when to present it to the NCC and selectboard. Williams offered to report the progress to the NCC
  - The volunteers will meet again during March to draft a grant on signage.
8. *AT corridor status update*—Krembs summarized letter from the USFS, which set out a timeline that would lead to a summer decision of the recommended trail authorizations within the Appalachian Trail corridor.

## Trail use

9. *Winter hikes*—Swenson reported that there were many participants for winter snowshoeing and Nordic skiing events. She felt that toning down the description of the activities would broaden participation. The snowshoeing events attracted mostly novice-level participants. She attributed the success of the program to the Winter Trails Historical Society talk, discussed above. She plans to propose new activities for upcoming months.
10. *Continuation of the Discover Norwich Trails program in 2021*—Flanders reported no new information on this program.
11. *Trailhead parking*—Krembs gave an overview of the parking situations at Cossingham and Happy Hill Roads.
  - Cossingham Trail parking is overloaded with people parking on road at peak times, causing distress to the neighbors. The Upper Valley Land Trust is involved with addressing these problems with landowners, who maintain private trails, nearby.

- Vehicles parked at Happy Hill have received written warnings, but no citations as of yet. The issue is whether a snow plow is able to turn around there. The public works driver reported no major difficulties in doing so, during snow plowing. The parking ordinance at <http://norwich.vt.us/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/parkingordinance.pdf> was reviewed. It says of Happy Hill Road (6.1 A), “Vehicles shall not park in a turnaround area, so as to block entrance or egress to trail, obstruct snow removal, prevent free flow of traffic, or prevent vehicles from turning around at these locations.”
12. *Review website guidance*—A review was made without recommendation for any changes of the following material in the website, regarding:
- Parking at <https://norwichtrails.org/parking-guidelines/>
  - Dogs at <https://norwichtrails.org/when-taking-your-dog/>

## Financial

13. *Bench for Ballard Trail*— Krembs and Faughnan reported that there are two donors for a bench to be placed near the Brown Schoolhouse Bridge. Others are welcome to add to the contribution. The prospective bench is like those. Donations of 50-100 dollars are requested for a total of \$400. The plan is to work with the Norwich Historical Society to purchase the bench to allow tax-deductible contributions, plus a contribution to the NHS.
14. *Clarification of purchasing procedures*—Following some conflicting characterizations of current procedures, Swenson offered to bring clarification from the town manager to the next meeting.
15. *Trails infrastructure categories for funding by 2021 grants*—Two potential sources were discussed:
- Women’s Club funds: Flanders reported that full-color 3ft x 3ft signs at Staples cost \$44 for corrugated (like pollical yard signs) and \$90 for polystyrene. Samples are available at the W. Lebanon store. The following sites could receive new 3 x 3 kiosk signs (or 3 x 2 small signs):
    - Parcel 5
    - Gile Mountain
    - Ballard Park
    - Brown Schoolhouse Bridge
    - Upper Ballard Trailhead
    - Happy Hill
    - Cossingham Trail
    - Burton Woods Trail
    - Brown Schoolhouse Trail (small on Bragg Hill Road)
    - Blue Ribbon Trail (small)
    - Bradley Hill Trail (small)
    - Heyl Trail (small at Elm)
    - Heyl Trail (small on Bragg Hill Road)
    - Questionable: Hazen and Rosemary Rieser trails

The above 13 locations could cost about \$650.
  - Mascoma Bank Grant: Flanders reported that Mascoma Bank grants are not a good fit for funding Norwich trail projects. They range from \$5 to \$50K and provide “capital

funding to not-for-profit organizations within Mascoma Bank's market area that will contribute to the long-term benefit of its communities".

16. *Planning for FY 2022-23 budget*—Flanders suggested requesting town budget inclusion from the selectboard under a new Public Works line item for "Trailhead parking", as follows:
- Gile Mountain parking lot expansion, subject to a FY 2020-21 scoping study.
  - Elm Street parking improvements, as follows: Utility ROW (subject to coordination with neighbors), augmented shoulder parking, and augmented shoulder spillover parking on Hickory Ridge Road.
  - Happy Hill Road installation of parking beyond power pole on south side to avoid conflict with turn-around. A review images of the site, suggested the feasibility of this location.
  - Two-vehicle off-road parking at Burton Woods Trail.
- This will be developed further for the April meeting.

### **Other**

17. *Website update*—Plummer added a brief memorial to Liz Russell on the homepage. The idea of using Facebook and Instagram to publicize hiking and trail work events, received interest. There may be a capable young person, connected with the NCC, who could help.
18. Items for April meeting
- a. Scope of work for Lower Ballard Trail
  - b. Brown Schoolhouse Bridge parking—finishing the work, as intended
  - c. Grant proposal: Trail information
  - d. Further development of 2021-22 budget recommendations
  - e. Proposed 2021 trail work projects
    - i. Lower Ballard side-hill and gully crossings: Reconnaissance report.
    - ii. Upper Ballard bank and gully crossings: Reconnaissance report.
19. Items for future meetings
- a. Resolve issue with Happy Hill parking information, in coordination with police and public works departments.
  - b. Developing a trails master plan, as required by the 2020 Norwich Town Plan.

### **20. Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm.