

# Agenda

## Norwich Trails Committee and volunteers monthly meeting

7 pm, September 1, 2021

**Location:** Norwich Historical Society

### AGENDA

#### 1. Approval of agenda

2. Comments from those present

#### Trail infrastructure

3. Reports on recent trail blockages and actions taken or planned:

a. August 15<sup>th</sup> work day

4. Proposed work for Gile Mountain and Woods Road Trails

a. Repair hemlock steps

b. Address parking lot drainage

5. Scope of Lower-Ballard Trail work

a. Report on work completed

6. Trail kiosks—FY 2021-2 Trails budget: \$5,500

a. Update progress

b. Identify locations

7. Trail kiosk signage

a. Review sample sign

b. Identify material to be shown

c. Identify town approval process

8. Work days to schedule:

a. September 19<sup>th</sup> – Work on Grand Canyon ford

b. October 17<sup>th</sup>—TBD

9. Appalachian Trail Corridor

a. Report on action from USFS

10. Conversion of Burton Woods Road segment to a trail

a. Review draft NTC memo to Selectboard

11. Planning scope of work on Lower Ballard Trail—Discuss report received on flood robustness of UVTA proposed Scope of work.

#### Financial

12. Planning for FY 2022-23 budget: Parking—Draft report to Norwich selectboard

a. Gile Mountain

b. Burton Woods Road

c. Elm Street

d. Happy Hill Road – See C. Lang correspondence (Appendix A)

#### Other

13. Review draft proposal for parking signage at Happy Hill Road

14. Prepare for Norwich Historical Society September 11 Community Organization Fair

15. Items for September meeting

- a. Schedule construction and installation of kiosks
  - b. Confirm signage for kiosks
  - c. Developing a trails master plan, as required by the 2020 Norwich Town Plan.
16. Items for future meetings
- 17. Adjourn**

## Discussion material for agenda items:

### 4. Proposed work for Gile Mountain Trail

**From:** Jim Faughnan <jimfaughnan74@gmail.com>

**Date:** August 6, 2021 at 1:20:34 PM EDT

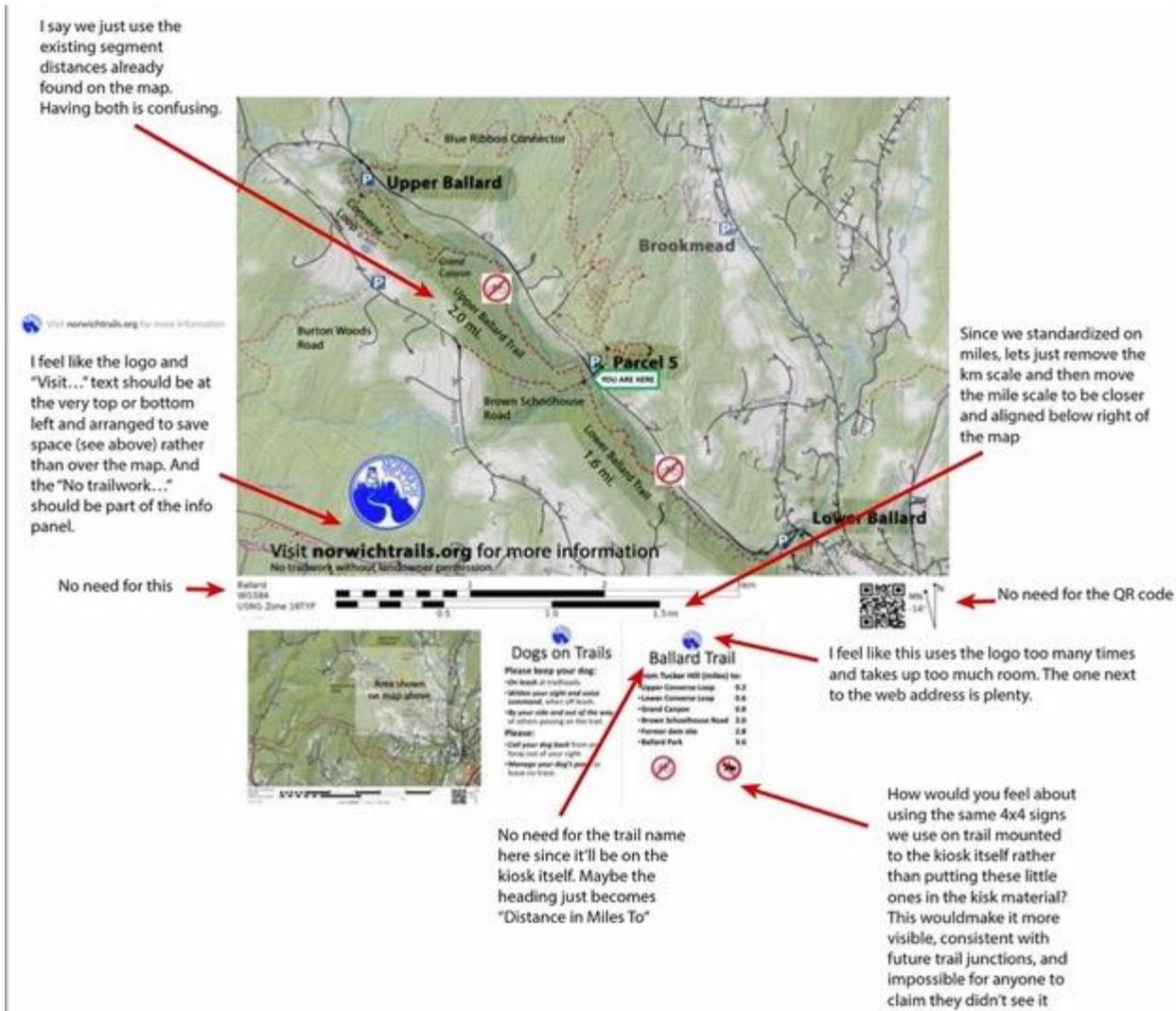
Another possible project is on Gile. Yesterday, Cody and I looked at the hemlock steps on the upper section. There are several that have decayed to the point of being a safety hazard. This section is about 40' in length. With current pressure treated prices, a 6x6x8' is only \$8.00 more than hemlock. Total material cost would be about \$900.00. If the materials were staged ahead, my guess is that 8 to 10 volunteers could complete this in 8 hours. If we did it with stone, cost would be much higher. The other concern is completing this before mid September to avoid the fall foliage hikers. As I mentioned at the meeting, the Gile account has almost \$800.00 remaining. Finally, Gile has seen enough rain fall in the past month to flush clean a lot of the drainage infrastructure. From top to bottom, the worst area is the parking lot drainage ditch which highway has been aware of for a month. The southwest corner of the lot is soft.

### 7. Kiosk format:

Possible trail ethics to be posted from Vermont Trails and Greenways Council Trail Ethic page:

- Know and respect the allowable use of the trail
- Respect other trail users
- Respect public and private landowners' property
- Use good judgment and tread lightly; trail conditions are subject to change at any time
- Stay on marked trails
- Respect natural resources, historic structures and wildlife
- Be prepared with food, water and first aid
- Pack out your trash
- Respect all trail closures
- Plan ahead, be safe and have fun

Williams mark-up of sign design:



12. d. Correspondence from Chris Lang, regarding the advisability of providing extra parking above the turnaround on Happy Hill Road (**Appendix A**)

13. Proposal for parking signage at the turnaround on Happy Hill Road (**Appendix B**).

## Appendix A

### Correspondence on expanded parking on Happy Hill Road

From: **Lang, Christopher**

Date: Thu, Aug 12, 2021 at 11:58 AM

Subject: For Steve Flanders and NTC regarding Parking on Happy Hill

To: [norwichtrails@gmail.com](mailto:norwichtrails@gmail.com) <[norwichtrails@gmail.com](mailto:norwichtrails@gmail.com)>

Dear Steve,

Thank you for taking my call yesterday to discuss interest by the Norwich Trail Committee to potentially expand public parking beyond the end of Happy Hill Road. As a follow up, I would like to share my concerns with you and the rest of the Norwich Trails Committee so that you understand my position.

First, in and of itself, I have to ask, is there really a parking problem at the end of Happy Hill Road? Reading through the March NTC minutes, it appears that the police started to issue written warnings last winter. To clarify one incident, a young woman with Maine plates had parked in the turnaround overnight. My wife Carole and I were concerned that the owner had gotten hurt out on a trail as the car was parked there a very cold winter night, so we called the police. Turns out, it was a friend of a neighbor who was staying in a nearby home and not a hiker. I believe the police left a warning on her car not to park there, but that is the only warning I know of. Furthermore, since purchasing our property in 2004, my family and I have never seen or heard from neighbors that there is a problem of too many cars parked at the end of Happy Hill – except for the rare occasion of teenagers using it as a late-night party spot. As is also indicated in the March NTC minutes, the public works plow person is quoted as saying, in reference to turning around at the end of Happy Hill, he has had “no major difficulties in doing so during snow plowing.”

Second, if the real issue instead is too many cars parking on Cossingham Rd, then using and expanding parking on Happy Hill as an alternative creates other real problems. Doing so will result in more traffic on Happy Hill, which as you know is a steep and narrow single lane road that is extra challenging in winter, especially when you meet a car head on. People also park on Cossingham Rd so they can access the Cossingham trails. If they park at the end of Happy Hill instead, it is likely some will use or create a bootleg trail across the AT corridor to access the Cossingham network. This will further complicate relations with the USDA Forest Service.

Third, adding more gravel and impervious surface to build new parking spaces adjacent to wetlands and the head waters of Bragg Brook runs counter to local and statewide initiatives to protect our water ways. And even if the state were to grant a wetland permit, doing so doesn't mean it is the right or responsible thing to do especially if the need for more parking is questionable and is within 50 feet of wetlands and head waters. In terms of our own access, I have always tried to minimize mowing and keep both the edges and middle of the road as green and overgrown as possible in summer and as snow covered and un-sanded and unsalted in winter to reduce run-off into this adjacent area.

Lastly, the State of Vermont required towns to map all Class I, II, III, IV town highways and legal trails by July 1, 2015. According the 2015 Vermont General Highway Map for Norwich (and the latest map done in 2018, both attached), Happy Hill Road ends 0.56 of a mile up from Bragg Hill

Rd at the current parking area beyond which no road or trail is on the map and instead shows only the Appalachian Trail Corridor. Perhaps this is a special case because of the AT, but from what I understand, if towns did not map public roads or trails by July 1, 2015, then the road or trail went away with the land underneath potentially reverting to the abutting landowner(s). It is also my understanding that if the only access to a parcel is over a pre-existing road or trail that ends up not being mapped by July 1, 2015, the right to use the road or trail as a private right of way to access that parcel continues. In other words, I can continue to use and maintain the 600-foot section of improved trail beyond the end of Happy Hill Road - as I have done since 2004 - but the land itself underneath may now be owned as part of the AT Corridor or 50/50 owned with the other abutter to the north. Attached is a helpful reference on this subject created by the Vermont Agency of Transportation called the *Ancient Road Practicum*.

I am not an attorney, but given the complexity here, I anticipate that the town will need to do a legal review of actual rights before proceeding with a potential parking project.

To close, I have no issue with people continuing to park in the current parking area at the end of Happy Hill Road to access the AT Corridor for recreation, but for the reasons outlined above, I am against the creation of an additional parking area beyond the end of the town-mapped and town-maintained portion of Happy Hill Road.

Thank you for taking my concerns into consideration.

Kind Regards, Chris

# Appendix B

## Happy Hill Road parking at turnaround

September 3, 2021

**To: Acting/temporary town manager**

**Cc: Norwich Selectboard**

1. *Summary* – This is to request clearer signage to reflect the text and intent of the parking ordinance, as pertains to the turn-around at the top of Happy Hill Road. In this proposal, only the signage need be changed, not the existing ordinance.
2. *Background* – The widening in the road at the top of Happy Hill Road serves two functions: 1) It is a turnaround for town road maintenance equipment and 2) it is a valuable parking area for people wishing to access the Appalachian Trail via the Tucker Trail.
3. *Configuration* – The widened area leads further towards the Tucker Trail and a private drive way. Opposite there is a drive, blocked by a gate, which includes a substantial portion of town right of way. A vehicle can use both the widened area and the drive when turning around.



Happy Hill Road turn-around area—widened (left), continuation (center), drive (right)

4. *Ordinance* – In Section 6.1 *No Parking Zones (Designated streets)* of the [Town of Norwich Parking Ordinance](#), there are several entries under “Marked turnaround areas/or turning circles”, including one for Happy Hill Road, for which the following text applies: “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.”
5. *Ambiguity of signage* – The sign at the top of the turnaround area has the following elements:
  - Do not block entrance/exit to trail
  - Do not park to obstruct snow removal
  - Do not block vehicle turnaround

These elements mirror the ordinance language and lead those using the area to believe that, if it’s not snowing and they’re not obstructing a turnaround, then they are conforming to the

ordinance. Whereas, officers enforcing the ordinance in 2020 and 2021 have interpreted the ordinance to mean a blanket ban on parking in that area.



Current signage

6. *Proposed solution* – It appears that the ambiguity of interpretation can be resolved through signage that clearly delineates the no-parking area. The Norwich Trails Committee and its volunteers recommend removing the existing signage and substituting a sign that delineates the no-parking area, which is required for vehicle turn-around. Such signage might be as shown, below, with the ambiguous signage removed.



Sign clearly delineating no-parking area

7. *Implementation* – Placing the signage that delineates the no-parking turnaround area at a point approximately 25 feet down from the top of that area would eliminate the current ambiguity. The exact sign location could be determined by turning a DPW vehicle around in the identified area, prior to sign placement.

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Craig Layne, Chair of the Norwich Conservation Commission

Norwich Trails Committee  
Tracy Hall, 300 Main Street  
PO Box 376 Norwich VT 05055