

Bike & Trail Committee Meeting
January 17, 2024, 7:00 P.M.
Community Center Meeting Room, 8 Simpson St, Newtown, CT 06470

Minutes

These minutes are subject to approval by the Bike & Trail Committee (BTC).

Attendees: Brad Accettella, Logan Adler, Jim Bernardi, Glenn Boyle (via video), Geordie Elkins, Barney Molloy, Charles Zukowski. Absent members: Robert Morris. Public attendees: Jeff Krantz, Tracy Van Buskirk

CALL TO ORDER – The meeting was called to order at 7:01 pm.

PUBLIC COMMENT – Ms. Van Buskirk reported that she obtained permission from Land Use to clear the path on the Town open space from Deep Brook Road, which will begin what could be a several mile trail leading to Cherry Grove Preserve. There was a discussion about some of the parcels included, documenting permissions, and what exactly the name of this route should be. Mr. Frantz spoke later; see new business.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Mr. Accettella made a motion to approve the December 20th meeting minutes, seconded by Mr. Molloy. All in favor. Motion passed.

CHAIRPERSONS' REPORT

- Mr. Zukowski reported that Mr. Evans resigned from the committee because his work commitments had significantly increased. Names of possible candidates were solicited and interested people should send their resume to the First Selectman's executive assistant.
- Mr. Zukowski reported that he received the disc golf plan from Parks & Recreation. The plan is a number of years old and sited in Treadwell Park. Trails in this area are now encouraged. He also reported that based on the trail review on January 6th, the beavers had not returned. Also, the plank bridge that washed away was recovered and put back in place.

OLD BUSINESS:

- Al's Trail Project Status – Mr. Elkins reported that the State returned the signed contract and Land Use will sign so that work can begin. A steering committee is envisioned to guide the project as it unfolds. Volunteers for this position are requested. The steering committee will be involved with trail details, facilitating public engagement, etc. The plan is to create a greenway from Fairfield Hills to the end of Al's trail.
- Grant status update - There are no known changes.
- Paper Road Status Update – There are no known changes.
- Monitor Hill Rd trail reroute approval is still pending. There was discussion about compiling a list of desirable rerouting to ensure trails, such as those connecting Newtown Forest Association properties near the Head O' Meadow school, are all on open space, so approval could be efficiently obtained. To better describe this topic, in the future it will be labeled "Minor Trail Reroutes".
- Interaction and cooperation with other organizations is ongoing. This meeting was attended by members of the Newtown Bridal Lands Association (NBLA) and Connecticut Forest and Parks Association (CFPA). Mr. Accettella reported that Dan Holmes asked if BTC wanted to participate in the 2024 Earth Day activities planned for April 27th at the Newtown Middle School (10-4pm). There

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was a discussion about setting up a table and banner and adding Earth Day to next month's meeting agenda.

- Fund raising – No changes reported. Mr. Elkins reported that there is a \$5k grant which should be shown in the Town's books. The BTC secretary will confirm with Newtown Finance Department that "Bike & Trail Committee" is a valid earmark in Newtown's system (so that donations, grants and other revenue can be accounted for and used for BTC purposes). Also, will follow up with Reverie about any proceeds that may have resulted from their Blimp product.
- Trail Maintenance / Review – There was a discussion about the January trail review of the Treadwell Park butterfly trail and possible disc golf site. It was quite wet and muddy. Walking was easier on the berm. There was a discussion about the positive feedback from neighbors to the Town open space that abuts White Oak Farm Road and some invasive species removal in the area. There was a discussion about the next event, planned for February 3rd, to review the area next to the Halfway River Preserve. It can be accessed from Rt. 34, and there is parking on the southwest side, between Jordan Hill Road and Great Quarter Road. Mr. Zukowski will provide a map before the event. There was discussion about March's event being at the Bentagrass Lane trail location.
- POCD24 status – The public comment period is closed and the consultant is working on a presentation for an expected public event at the end of February.
- Deep Brook Farm update – There are no known reportable changes. Negotiations are believed to be continuing.

NEW BUSINESS:

- Mr. Frantz of CFPA gave a presentation with handouts which explained the organization's role in maintaining and improving the Blue Blaze trail system that exists in the Upper and Lower Paugussett State Forest. They ensure that the blazes are visible and walk the trails to ensure they are in good repair. Tree and branch removal is done by the volunteers. Additionally, improvements are made to enhance users' experience. For example, signs and kiosks are planned to be added and the trail maps shown are to be updated. The plan is to include Al's Trail in the updated signs. There was a discussion about the exact route that exists and CFPA will ensure the updated maps includes the most recent changes. Mr. Frantz noted that both hiking and biking are allowed in the forest; however, horseback riding is not. He also noted that the trails are open year-round; closures for endangered birds are no longer necessary. Mr. Elkins noted that signs showing suggested biking routes (and hiking only, on account of terrain) is a good idea.

PUBLIC COMMENT – None.

ADJOURNMENT – Mr. Bernardi made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Elkins. All in favor. The meeting adjourned at 8:06pm.

Respectfully submitted by Glenn Boyle, Secretary