

Draft of minutes

Trail Plan Work Session
January 5, 2010

Wheelwright Room

Exeter Town Offices

Present: *Steve Shope, Jim Clark, Tom Gregory, Pete Richardson, Don Briselden, Michelle Newman, Bob Kelly, Ginny Raub, Jay Sullivan, Sean Lyons and Kristin Murphy, Natural Resource Planner.*

Mr. Bob Kelly led off with a discussion of upcoming trail projects developed during work on the Trail Management Plan. At the Oaklands, an area leading off from the parking lot was identified as an area of concern. The condition of that portion of the trail has deteriorated over the years; erosion from gravel washing out and becoming rutty. The group that walked the trail in September was unsure how to proceed as they did not wish to bring in any mechanized equipment and were limited to develop any re-routes. It was then brought to their attention the Timberland Co. has two service days where employees are sent out into different communities to contribute to an environmental project. The first day entitled Community Greening is set for Earth Day Thursday, April 22, 2010. Mr. Kelly had been in contact with Timberland and was encouraged to submit a proposal due later this month. Mr. Kelly questioned if funds were available in the ECC budget for such a project as the proposal asks as to the availability of monies for the project. The figure of up to \$2000 for materials was discussed.

Mr. Briselden drafted a motion for further discussion that the ECC support the application to Timberland for 50 volunteers to work on the trail project with a planning budget of \$2000. The plan would be subject to further review in the spring. Motion seconded. Discussion followed with concerns the trail with the improvements might favor one user (bikers) at the expense of another user (hikers). Mr. Sullivan expressed his concern of no trail improvements be put in place without prior consent of the ConCom. Mr. Kelly assured him that would not occur and would present detailed drawings and plans developed from a site walk to the April meeting of the Commission. The concern the improved trail be suitable for multi-use was noted and will be taken into consideration.

Mr. Richardson asked for a motion based on the discussion and it was amended to state the ECC supports the application to Timberland for a minimum of 50 volunteers to work on the trail plan with a planning budget of \$2000. The plan with detailed drawings and specifications will be subject to a springtime site review. Motion seconded and carried.

Mr. Kelly continued outlining three additional maintenance trail projects located in the H-S Town Forest. With the use of a H-S trail map to illustrate the areas of concern they were areas mostly within low-land and muddy areas on the Green, Yellow and Blue trails. Mr. Sullivan discussed re-routes put in place some years ago and was disappointed with the routes and the resulting conditions. To his knowledge no ECC member had viewed the area before any action was taken. It was agreed a spring site walk would take place and the re-routes viewed. Also noted were the number of braids that have occurred. Even if they have been closed down with brush piles, often the brush is removed. One solution was to again site walk, flag the braids and place CC signs noting closed area. Mr. Kelly stated perhaps 3 or more site walks be conducted throughout the summer to

be aware of existing conditions. Mr. Briselden remarked the trail members were good stewards and a valuable resource out in the forests.

Mr. Richardson wanted to alert the trail users the ECC was considering to refurbish the forest management plan and to anticipate logging activity in the area by the gas line.

Mr. Richardson noting items in the Trail Plan asked on the status of certain items. Ms. Murphy responded the maps have been ordered, the trees have been flagged along the trails but weather intervened before the actual blazing of all the trails could be completed and the construction and re-orienting the kiosks has also been delayed by the weather.

Mr. Sullivan opened the discussion to establishing new trails. Various sites were located on the maps and in some instances would leave Conservation areas and go onto private property. It was agreed the ideas were worth pursuing.

Mr. Shope wished to return to the issue of leaf blowing in the Town forest. He acknowledged it was controversial but felt it had merit. He stated since the ConCom meeting he has been approached by both bikers and hikers inquiring why the trails weren't blown. He felt it does help in water drainage but agreed there has been some overzealous usage in the past. He would like to see permission granted for certain areas and not given a blanket approval; doesn't want to go back to the use of rakes on the low land areas. Mr. Sullivan felt it permanently widens the trail and the trail becomes polished and does not have an opportunity to recover. Mr. Kelly suggested it would be beneficial to talk about it on the actual trails.

Mr. Briselden felt the woods to be a natural place and did not wish the natural paths turned into sidewalks.

The discussion generated opinions and comments among the group present. Mr. Richardson did agree it needed resolution but added he wasn't looking for a decision this evening but to gather more info and have it be an ongoing discussion. With that he asked for a motion to adjourn.

Motion made, seconded and passed,

Respectfully submitted

Ginny Raub, Secretary