

FAYSTON CONSERVATION COMMISSION
September 1, 2020 - Zoom Video Conference
MEETING MINUTES

Attendees: Lisa Koitzsch, Corrie Miller, Geri Procaccini, Akhil Kaplan, Gene Fialkoff,
Ned Kelley

Guest: Ross Saxton (Ross), Executive Director, Mad River Path Association (MRPA)

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Gene moved to approve the minutes from the 8/4/20 meeting; Akhil seconded; all approved.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

GUEST SPEAKER

Ross gave a summary of recent MRPA activity.

1. Bridge repair needed on a steep section of Millbrook Trail from Tucker Hill Inn to Marble Hill Road. Corrie suggested a style like the Chase Brook Forest Bridge but MRPA does not have an easement for that type of structure.
2. MRPA would like to construct a trail connecting Irasville Village to the Long Trail and are working with Sugarbush to connect trails from the McCullough Barn to the base of Mt Ellen.
3. MRPA is currently in negotiations to buy 18 acres of land off Tucker Hill Road. Ross is meeting with Walt Opuszynski, Field Recreation Specialist to the VT Dept. of Forest, Parks and Recreation on Wednesday, 9/3/20 to walk the area. Ross mentioned the possibility, after the trail is built, of MRPA selling or donating the land to the State. If MRPA maintains ownership, the land could be used for educational purposes. Corrie asked if a parking lot is planned and Ross said it is not, as parking is available next to the Swanson Inn and in a small pullout on the opposite side of Tucker Hill. The MRPA is currently working out details for permitting and zoning with the DRB. There is no state funding; MRPA and donors will finance the project.
4. Lisa asked Ross if he knew what the new trail was that was marked off Chain Gang and Ross didn't know but did suggest that it could be a proposed trail that the Mad River Riders are working on as a potential trail system that will go through the Phen Basin area in Fayston. All members of the FCC expressed concern about adverse effects on wildlife and wildlife habitat in this sensitive area. Akhil will contact the state to express the FCC's request to be added to the list of stakeholders for that area.

FAYSTON TOWN FORESTS

CHASE BROOK

1. Akhil and Ky Koitzsch laid out a new trail that will allow dog walkers to loop around rather than turn back at the "No dogs Allowed" signs on the Marble Hill Farm property border. Akhil organized a work party with the FCC and volunteers Ky Koitzsch and Harry Hutchison on Friday, 8/28/20, and the new trail was constructed. Lisa said the naming of the new trail "The Fred Gilbert Trail" has been approved by the Select Board and we can schedule a naming ceremony in the near future to include the community. MRPA may be interested in helping with maintenance; the new trail is not mapped yet. There is an app called Trail Finder and all Fayston trails can be found there once they are added in.

BOYCE HILL TOWN FOREST

1. Corrie and Lisa announced the appointment of four new members of the Boyce Hill Steering committee: Woody Dugan, Karrie Thomas, Peter Colgan, and Sally Dwyer. There will be the first steering committee meeting to introduce the new members and delineate priorities and timelines the week of September 14th.
2. Natural Resource Inventory/Ecological Assessment: Lisa and Corrie received 3 proposals. They asked for input from the FCC and the consensus was that two shone above the third and each of the top two had great attributes. All agreed that the one from Dubois & King may be the best choice based on several factors, especially due to its adherence to the proposed timeline outlined in the RFP. Corrie and Lisa will follow up with a few questions and make a final decision in a few days.
3. Lisa met with Steve Hagenbush - Conservation Biologist with Audubon Vermont - who conducted a bird survey of the Boyce Hill property. He will be submitting a report this month.
4. Corrie talked to a neighbor regarding the small-mouth bass in the pond who said that the fish have likely been there for a few years, having been placed there by the former owner. Therefore, the FCC is comfortable temporarily shelving this concern until the Spring when Vermont Fish and Wildlife Dept can weigh in. Two new fire pits have been constructed at the pond and Corrie suggested FCC members remove any stones and ash piles that have accumulated. All agreed that another sign should be installed at the pond, clearly stating "Swim at Own Risk; No Fishing; No Winter Use." We also discussed a sign at firepit locations reminding people "no fires", and perhaps "no camping."

KNOTWEED

1. Ned said the pile of knotweed at the McCullough Barn parking lot area has died down completely, so that method of disposal should be acceptable. Knocking back knotweed with weed whackers and whips works to eventually eradicate the site.
2. Akhil will work with Jito Coleman - Warren Conservation Commission member - to develop an Adopt-a-knotweed program in the Valley, to begin next spring.
3. Lisa mentioned the extensive knotweed along a long driveway on private property at the end of Stagecoach Road, and that the property owners have been helping to eradicate it.
4. Ned made signs for the knotweed areas throughout Fayston. Ned, Judi and Akhil posted the signs and all agreed this is a great way to bring awareness to the community of where knotweed exists.

COMPOSTING

The Community Compost Group has developed a plan and details of their work and these can be accessed through the Valley Community Compost Group newsletter. Please contact Geri for a copy.

OTHER BUSINESS

1. Lisa mentioned a beaver pond on Randell Road where the local beaver population is attempting to block a culvert that runs under Randell Road. The Road Crew has been removing the mud and debris with a backhoe. There could potentially be a plan to remove the beavers as well. Lisa contacted Kim Royar - Vermont Furbearer Biologist - and will meet with one of her technicians on Friday, 9/4/20 at 9:30AM, to discuss the issue. All FCC members expressed the desire to preserve Beaver ponds in Fayston.
2. On 9/29/20, at 6:30PM, there will be a webinar held by Jens Hilke of Vermont Fish and Wildlife about wildlife habitats in and around the Mad River Valley.

3. Lisa said the Fayston Select Board is planning a joint meeting in late October with representatives from the Planning Commission, DRB, and FCC to discuss the finalized Town Plan.

The next FCC meeting will be held virtually through Zoom at 6PM, October 1, 2020

Respectfully submitted,
Geri Procaccini, Secretary