

Minutes of the Forests and Trails Committee
Town of Conway, Massachusetts
June 23rd, 2021

Amended July 7th, 2021

Meeting was convened at 7:00 pm on the steps of the Field Memorial Library

Called to order by Marilyn Webster

Present: Deb Donaldson, Priscilla Lynch, Kay Spencer, Marilyn Webster

Absent: none

Old Business: this is the inaugural meeting of this committee, so there was no old business, nor was there any formal agenda.

New Business:

The first order of business was the appointment of officers.

Marilyn and Deb were appointed co-chairs.

Kay was appointed secretary.

Priscilla was appointed liaison to the Open Space Committee.

It was agreed that terms of office should be staggered, so that all the terms would not end at the same time. Decided:

Marilyn and Deb each have a 3 year term.

Priscilla has a 2 year term.

Kay has a 1 year term.

Note: Kay has not yet been sworn in by the town clerk as an official town committee member, nor taken the other necessary steps (ethics class, reading the guide for town appointees, introduction at the Select Board meeting). She will get this done before the next meeting.

It was suggested that we might wish to add one more member to make an odd number, for the purpose of eliminating voting ties. Besides word of mouth, it was decided to put a notice in the next Conway Currents, with an invitation to join the committee. Marilyn will draft such a notice and pass it around for review.

The role of consultants to the committee was brought up, as several people have offered to serve as such, although they do not want to be members of the committee itself. These include so far: Cayte McDonough (invasives, native plants)

Denise Dwelley (trees — she was a professional arborist)

Meghan Gump (mountain bikers)

General discussion of first actions of the committee followed.

It was agreed that before any concrete action is taken, we need research the activities of related clubs and committees to find overlaps and gaps, and introduce our own committee to them. These include but are not limited to:

Open Space Committee

Parks, Recreation and Trails Committee

Conway Snowmobile Club

Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership

Carbon Trust

David Lee, landowner and major voice for the Lee Trust lands.

Priscilla will contact the Open Space Committee, as she is our official liaison to them., and also to Phil Kantor about the Carbon Trust

Marilyn will reach out to the Parks, Rec, and Trails Committee, and also the Mohawk Trail Woodland Partnership.

Deb will talk to the Snowmobile Club, and to David Lee.

It was also noted that any member who has not yet read the Stewardship Plan on the Conway Town Government web page, both the Fournier and Town Forest sections, should do so.

The following ideas for further action were brought up, once we have gathered more information about the current status of other groups.

1. Map and Signage Project

There is no existing map of trails in the township of Conway that is available to residents, other than the snowmobile trail map distributed to members of the Snowmobile Club. Such a map, even if limited only to the Fournier and Town Forest properties and connecting trails, would be very useful. Signage indicating entrance into those properties would also be helpful. Signs could include a simple map as well. Another use of signage would be interpretative signs for nature walks, see below.

2. Nature Walks

Engaging local experts in birding, wildflowers, pond ecology, and the like, to conduct guided nature walks. Hoping to help the residents of Conway build more of a relationship with the forest.

3. Connection to Conway School

Creating more connection between our schoolchildren and our forests, through outdoor programs and opportunities that teachers can incorporate into their curricula.

4. Invasives Removal

There is more than one group already involved in this. We should find out who they are and what they are doing. Beth Grisham is someone to be contacted in this regard.

5. Road and Trail Degradation

Illegal off-road motorized vehicles, failing culverts, uncorrected drainage issues on the decommissioned roads, erosion, flooding, mud. These are all connected issues.

6. Best Silviculture Practices Study

The Dept. of Conservation and Recreation has such a guide, but we would like to prepare a more stringent adaption of it, with less emphasis on a “working” i.e. logged forest, and more on true sustainability. Need to identify what “sustainability” really means in this context. Carbon trust? Where does logging fit in? Other identified goals?

Action — Priscilla will get a reading list assembled for the next meeting.

We then discussed creating a regular meeting time.

Decided: 4th Wednesday of each month, 7 pm at the Town Hall.

Our next meetings will be the 28th of July and the 25th of August.

Adjourned at 8:15 pm June 24th 2021

respectfully submitted by

Kay Spencer, secretary

Contact information for committee members:

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