

Town of Dover Trails & Recreation Committee
Meeting Minutes
via Zoom & in person
Tuesday, July 13, 2021

Members present: Mike Purcell, Paul Fisher, Patricia Sweeney, Kristin Mumford, Alison Ferris, Sarah Shippee

Also present: Shannon Wheeler, Jim McDevitt, Eric Durocher, Andy McLean, Wendy Johnson, Tim Shannon, Mike Garber

A recording of this meeting can be found here: <https://youtu.be/wKt-UjabzZ4>

Acting chair Sarah Shippee called meeting to order at 6:37 PM.

I. Public comments:

- a. Wendy Johnson: Prepared a pump track project at the Dover School located next to upper field as part of a grant program. AOE requirements have changed for the grant so seeking funding. Eric will present at next Selectboard meeting once he gets proposal/budget from Wendy. (Wendy signed off meeting at conclusion of this discussion.)
- b. Kristin: thank you to those that marked Horace Hill trails – really helped me visualize opportunities there.

II. Motion to amend Robert's Rules of Order regarding moderating meetings:

- a. As Eric is responsible for 70% or more of the items, we can amend Robert's Rules to let a non-committee member work as a moderator. This will save time and make things more productive.
- b. Motion by Alison to amend Robert's Rules of Order to permit a non-committee member to serve as the meeting moderator, seconded by Paul – all approve.

Eric took over as moderator for meeting at 6:47 PM.

III. Approve minutes from June 8th meeting:

- a. Motion by Sarah, seconded by Patricia - approved by all in attendance in June.

IV. Message from the Dover Selectboard:

- a. In discussions with several Selectboard members, the feeling is that this group is not headed in the right direction with conducting business and having positive and productive discussions. This group is a privilege to us and a hope for all interested parties to offer input and help. If the Selectboard feels this isn't working they can end the committee. Please keep this in mind, be sure to be recognized by the moderator before speaking and direct all comments to me. We have to start working together to be successful.

V. Valley Trail A- update:

- a. Held a Zoom meeting with Vermont Department of Transportation, Fuss & O'Neill, and Lamoreaux and Dickinson contacts all together. One party was dragging their feet and I think being with the others made them realize they need to get moving. I think we'll see some positive and momentous actions coming.

VI. Motorized vehicle trail use:

- a. Mike Garber: what we're talking about is keeping the long term integrity of these trails going forward. DVSJ has maintained most of the town trails for snowmobile use for the last 40+ years and has to ask for permission to use those trails each year. Snowmobiles are a low impact use on the trails because the snow and ice protect them. Motorized vehicles ruin trails with the weather patterns we've had. Those users don't have to ask for permission to use the trails and they do not contribute in maintaining them. What we're asking for is during weather events, including mud season and weeks like this, is that we temporarily close the trails to motorized vehicles.

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Camp owners will still be able to access but we'd like to close to public motorized users. It will be up to a few of us to hang signs and ropes saying trails closed to public use until the dates.

- b. Eric: who will be responsible for deciding when it's a weather event and who hangs these signs?
Mike: first we want the trails closed to motor vehicles for mud season. I haven't thought yet about details for a week like this but I'm sure I can work with the Town & the highway department.
- c. Andy: I'm not opposed to this idea, but I'm not sure how much it will help. These are town rights of way so I think our road commissioner, Travis Briggs, is the right person to make the call as to when it's appropriate. I think we should follow the National Forest Service's lead in the dates they use when they close trails. I know it will help some instances, but the chunk of woods we're talking about are accessible from Dover and Wardsboro. In a property like Horace Hill we know all the ins and outs and can plug them up. We can't in this area. If we close the Dover ends, the Wardsboro and illegal ins coming off private property won't be.
- d. Mike Purcell: I think any notice is better than no notice. Whatever we put up to indicate what people should not be doing should be coordinated with the National Forest Service and what they have in place. A lot of these trails are bordering National Forest Service trails. The mountain bike networks post info like this on their websites, so we should share once we have that info.
- e. Andy: one nuance about this - if we publicly declare that the trails are closed to motor vehicles, when they're reopen; we'll have an exponential increase in the motorized usage on these trails. My advice to keep it low key with public notice, to avoid an enforcement problem.
- f. Tim: Trail advocacy is important in the mountain bike community. In events like this with inches of rain, it is a message we send out regularly. Different mapping apps can share these posts. Mike Garber brings up a good point – a user group that is recreating on a piece of property that doesn't necessarily put in any time or effort in maintaining these areas, that might not be a problem except when they're doing it at a time that's hazardous to the trail network. Small mountain bikes going through a puddle and widening the trail is a much more difficult and expensive fix than staying off them all together when they're wet. If there is recreation going on; is that something the Town wants to continue to maintain? If there is a group that needs an outlet like ATVs is there a place that we can provide a better use area? Something that doesn't interfere with other groups.
- g. Eric: I think that's an excellent point. Snowmobiling is a very highly regulated activity. ATVs aren't. It is unfortunate we will bear the brunt of the cost of repairs, but we don't have a mechanism to police this group. I think the next step is Mike Garber speaking to Travis and putting together a proposal I can bring to the Selectboard to rope those trails off for mud season and also weather events.

VII. Grant updates:

- a. State and Federal grants in the pipeline that could allow us to fund some Horace Hill projects, educational grants for outdoor rec and more. Info is coming, once it's more solid Eric will share.

VIII. Renaming of the Dover Town Forest:

- a. Thank you to committee members that voted – Eric read through the name options, 5 out of the 6 members selected 'The Dover Town Forest and Phill Bartlett Recreation Area'. We'd like to bring our first recommendation to the Selectboard with this.
- b. Motion by Sarah to recommend to the Selectboard renaming the Dover Town Forest the 'Dover Town Forest & Phil Bartlett Recreation Area', seconded by Patricia. All approve.

IX. Horace Hill Planning Meeting:

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- a. Eric is still working on details with VMBA, DVSJ and others to meet working towards this – he'll send a Doodle Poll. This is not limited to just those parties; it will be sent around to a large group. A future meeting should take place at Horace Hill as well.
- X.** Future Trails Committee meetings format:
 - a. After a short discussion it was decided meetings would continue in a hybrid format – zoom and recorded and also in person at the Dover Town Offices.
- XI.** Motion to adjourn by Sarah at 7:22 PM, seconded by Mike.

Respectfully submitted,

Shannon Wheeler
Economic Development, Town of Dover