

## **DURHAM LAND STEWARDSHIP SUBCOMMITTEE**

Town Hall Council Chambers

Tuesday, February 11, 2020

3:30 PM

### **MEETING MINUTES**

**PRESENT:** Ellen Snyder, Gale Carey, Dennis Meadows, Mike Lynch, Kenny Rotner, Todd Selig, John Carroll, Andrea Bodo

**AGENDA** was amended to include discussion of Merrick Bridge project

#### **SPRAY-PAINTED TREES**

Ellen Snyder described a recent incidence of spray-painted trees on Stevens Woods, MacDonald Lot (UNH), and Moriarity (NHFG). Many trees were painted along trails on these three properties. The Town included a note in the Friday Update highlighting this incidence of vandalism and asking anyone with information to notify the Town Administration. The perpetrator responded anonymously saying they did it because some family members got lost in the dark and felt they had to mark the trails. They also said the Town's description was scathing and thus they remain anonymous. Ellen notified our partners NHFG and UNH, who we are partnering with on the interconnected trails and explained what we are doing to help curtail rogue trails and other activities. We are working together on signage and trail etiquette; hopefully this incidence will not jeopardize this successful collaboration. We've provided a lot of information about trails in this region, so people should know to ask for more information if they have questions or concerns, before doing things on property that they don't own. The Committee agreed that this was vandalism and dismaying; we will see what remedies we can implement to remove or hide the paint.

#### **STANDARDIZED TRAIL MAPS**

Ellen Snyder reported on a new contract with Strafford Regional Planning Commission to create a series of standardized trail maps for town conservation areas. The maps will be 8 ½ x 11 as well as a 36 x 36 or so and available on the town website for people to download. Funding provided by the Conservation Commission. Dennis Meadows noted that these town trails are a great asset that may draw more people to the community.

#### **ADOPT-A-TRAIL VOLUNTEER PROGRAM**

At our last meeting we talked about having volunteers adopt a property, but we decided that adopting trails was more feasible. Ellen drafted a simple Adopt-A-Trail Flyer and received good feedback from Gale Carey and Vin Dell'Ova. We need to think about how volunteers would report issues. Land Trusts use automated forms. Ellen will check with IT to see if we have that capability with the town website. Dennis Meadows asked about chain saw work. Volunteers are not allowed to use chain saws. We could look into chain saw training for volunteers. For now, DPW has been able to remove some trees over trails. Ellen will work on another draft of the Volunteer Flyer and seek volunteers for several properties.

#### **STEVENS WOODS UPDATE**

Dennis Meadows provided an update on the Oyster River bridge project. He gave a project update to the Conservation Commission at their last meeting. The DPW has issued a RFQ for the bridge and abutment engineering design and permitting. The deadline for submissions is Feb. 18<sup>th</sup>. Due to

permitting, it is unlikely that the bridge will be built in 2020. Dennis has talked with the State Trails Program about the \$80,000 grant and it is likely that it can be carried over to next year. There is \$30,000 in the Patron's Trust for the design phase. Ellen asked if the parking lot needs any engineering design. Mike Lynch said they could have an engineer take a look, but that DPW could build the parking lot this summer.

#### **LONGMARSH TRAILS AND LAND ASSESSMENT**

Ellen gave an overview of town-owned lands in the Longmarsh region, which include Colby Marsh, Langmaid Farm, Horsehide Creek, and the Transfer Station. An assessment of the trails and bridges is planned for 2020. Beaver are very active in this area, which is great. The long bog bridge along the Class VI portion of Longmarsh Rd is in need of repair. Mike Lynch noted that The Rotary has done repairs every year for past 10-12 years. Since the bridge sits in the wetland at times that used rough cut pine. Ellen suggested that we may want to design a more sustainable bridge by raising the level of the walkway. We would need to have an engineer design such a bridge. Other trails need some brushing out. We might want to open up the 2-3 acres around the historic Langmaid cellar hole. Ellen walked the Langmaid Farm and Horsehide Creek with Extension County Forester Rebecca DiGirolomo, we noted the lack of understory regeneration, likely due to deer browsing. We plan to walk the transfer station property. This region has many attributes including trails, oak-hickory forest, wetland habitats, and includes the Historic Quarry District, all of which would benefit from additional attention and interpretation. Dennis asked if the Eversource ROW offers any benefit. The Town section is pretty short; Eversource is providing funding to the town to help with the trail bridge on the Beaudette property.

#### **MERRICK BRIDGE PROJECT**

A flyer and pledge form were developed to raise \$2,500 in private funds to build a new bridge at the entrance to the Merrick property off Bagdad Road. We've highlighted the proximity to Riverwoods and Jackson's Landing. Gale Carey asked if we've made any direct contacts to Riverwoods yet. Dennis offered to follow-up with someone he knows there. John Carroll mentioned the proximity to the Class VI Road near the Evangelical Church, which could be another trail connection.

#### **WINTER TRAIL TROMP AND OTHER 2020 EVENTS**

Ellen reported on the Winter Trail Tromp that was organized by Brian Keegan, co-owner of Oyster River Cycle & Sport. He contacted local businesses to sponsor the event and created a Passport for participants. Several families took part, visiting one to four conservation properties (Thompson Forest, Doe Farm, Oyster River Forest, and Stevens Woods, where they got the passport stamped by a volunteer. Back in town they received a cupcake from Sweetened Memories. Ellen also shared a flyer of events co-sponsored with the Parks & Recreation Department that will be held at conservation areas from spring to fall. The September event could be the "grand opening" for Doe Farm.

#### **WAGON HILL FARM TRAILS**

Kenny suggested that a trails assessment at Wagon Hill Farm, similar to what we are doing on other properties, might be helpful, especially after the tour led by Mike to see the successful living shoreline and boardwalk completed thus far. Mike mentioned that the next phase of the project is going west along the shoreline, which will also include more boardwalk and fence. He suggested focusing the assessment on the trails on the east side of the property.

#### **LSC MEETING TIME AND DAY AND MEMBERSHIP**

Kenny noted that the current second Tuesday at 3:30 pm doesn't work for some people. He will send out a survey to see if there is a preferred day/time that works better. The current membership is

somewhat loose with representatives from the various town boards, town staff, and other community members. Perhaps we could add a representative from Riverwoods. Ellen said it would be helpful to clarify the membership. Kenny asked if the Land Stewardship Subcommittee should become its own committee. Todd Selig suggested looking at the Conservation Commission meeting minutes when the LSC was created to see what structure was described.

#### **UPDATE FROM MIKE LYNCH**

The potential hire for the new Vegetation Management Position at DPW fell through last spring, so the position went unfilled. DPW decided to take a different approach by hiring a more generalist staff member to work on the highway crew, which provides more flexible while also increasing capacity. They rented a large equipment last fall and completed a lot of roadside mowing and clean-up. Ellen asked whether there is now capacity to help with mowing at Doe Farm and the trails at Thompson Forest and Oyster River Forest. Mike thought they might not yet have the capacity for that. Kenny noted that the hope was that the fulltime Vegetation Management position would have that capacity, especially as we work on more conservation areas, we also create more ongoing maintenance needs. Dennis suggested that perhaps the DPW and LSC set priorities on what needs to get done. Ellen suggested another option is to hire a summer seasonal to assist with land stewardship. That is feasible, although hard to find people to apply.

#### **REPORTS FROM OTHER COMMITTEES**

Andrea Bodo (Heritage Commission) said we should promote the history of the towns as the lands are really historical.

John Carroll (Agricultural Commission) stated that the AC asked if LSC has looked into using goats. Ellen suggested that if they could bring forward a proposal with information on source of goats, cost, etc then we could find a pilot project on town lands. John said he would research that.

**NEXT MEETING:** March 10th

Meeting adjourned at 4:50 pm

Submitted by Ellen Snyder