

Minutes of the October 5, 2017 Bolton Trails Committee Meeting

Attendees:

Gordon Taylor (chair), Jeff Bryan, Larry Kunz (via email), Bob Roemer, Steve Rothman (note taker), Andrew "Drew" Shaubhut, Keith Silver, Betsy Taylor-Kennedy, Gordon Wallis

1. This was the first meeting since Jeff Larence resigned from the committee. Everyone noted Jeff's tremendous contributions to the Bolton trails activities. Gordon and Larry have discussed with Jeff his future involvement in the trails work-- he has offered to, for now, continue working on the maps, web site and trails guide. At some point in the future if he needs to phase out, he's agreed to donate all the IP (intellectual property such as copyrights and web domain). Gordon currently has access to the web site; Larry and Gordon have access to the Gmail account administration.
2. None of the current Trails Committee members is able to commit the amount of time Jeff did, so we discussed how to "spread the wealth"-- splitting up responsibilities between many people, and trying to organize the activities so it will be easier for different individuals to step in. Several of the meeting attendees felt that we should have two "levels". One is the folks who attend the monthly meetings, and define and prioritize the projects. This group might be called the Bolton Trails Steering Group. The other level is a much larger set of folks who volunteer for the various projects as their time permits, and is the Bolton Trails Committee.
3. We had a discussion about how to split up responsibilities. Larry suggested it could be done by "type of maintenance" (clearing, building bridges, etc.). Several folks felt, based on decades old trails support, it might be better to have it based on location: people who want to help maintain an area near their home or that they use a lot; that appeared to be the consensus of the group. We would need to find a couple of people per area to organize the work in that area; those folks would presumably be the ones who attend the monthly meetings. They would be responsible for finding volunteers to staff individual projects. For major projects which require special skills (e.g. building bridges), we would still need volunteers with the appropriate skills. Gordon volunteered to take responsibility for land near Wattaquaddock Hill. Steve will be glad to help with Rattlesnake, if additional people also volunteer.
4. After some discussion, we agreed that the next step is to identify all the near term projects (say, up to 3 months out) which we want to do, and their priorities. We can then look for someone to organize each project, and sign up volunteers to help. Jeff may have a list of projects--that list would need to be organized by area, how much work, and what skills are needed. Some of the near term projects are mentioned in the "Areas" section of the minutes, below.
5. We discussed having the group meet with Rebecca Longvall, the Bolton Conservation Agent, and/or the Conservation Commission, to make sure we all stay coordinated. LATE NEWS: Gordon talked to Rebecca; she's agreed to come to the next meeting (which isn't scheduled as of now).
6. We briefly discussed the annual mowing which is supposed to be done to several conservation fields: Bowers Springs, Butternut, Dunnell's Gift and a few others. This is really a ConComm responsibility; we believe they are working with Rebecca on it.

7. We noted that on several of the maps, we're missing green areas which indicate either public or private conservation land. One discussion was about whether we should show green for conservation land in other towns (Harvard, Lancaster and Stow)-- the sense of the meeting is that we should. This is already the case with the Delaney map. There are also some missing green areas for Bolton conservation land-- those are noted in the property specific items below. Gordon will follow up with Jeff.
8. Jeff had been working on the Freedom's Way Walk. Rebecca is trying to find out the current status and proposed route. At this point, it looks like it probably won't happen.
9. Gordon and Betsy have signed up for the Massachusetts Trails Conference in Leominster for two days in early November. They attended the last one in 2015 and it was time well spent for a modest outlay of \$45. We made contacts and learned a few things.
<http://www.masstrailsconference.com/>

Property Specific Items

10. 1 - Bolton Flats
 - a. Harvard and Lancaster conservation land should be shown in green.
 - b. Dunnell's Gift is a small lot of Trust or Town conservation land in the northeast corner of the intersection of Main St (117) and Still River (110) that needs to be shown in green.
11. 2 - Vaughn Hills
 - a. Larry noted that the water level in the pond is now low enough to open the shoreline trail on the west side of the pond (near photo 3). Some of that trail could use duckboards. Apparently there is a spare set on the east side of the pond which is no longer needed.
 - b. There is, or was, a bees' nest in the ground on the trail from the Woodside parking area. If it's still there (some folks thought it wasn't), perhaps something should be done about it-- what depends on whether it's on private land or conservation land. There is, or was, also a tree down across the trail near the nest.
 - c. Steve noted that the map now shows the trail at the northern end across the easement. Several folks said the trail has NOT been moved-- it's still on private land to the west, and they weren't certain how easy it would be to move the trail. No one was certain of the status-- where the trail is, who's land it's on, and whether the owners are happy (or at least accepting) of the current situation. It may be that, at a minimum, some "private land" signs should be put up.
 - d. There's a need for a new bridge (southeast of the Moen parking areas). It could be a girl scout/boy scout project. Rebecca has a proposal that Jeff wrote. ConComm has to review it because it involves using pressure treated wood in a wetlands area.
 - e. There is a new Trust conservation area which needs to be shown on the Vaughn Hills and Bowers Springs map-- the Bartsch gift. Gordon will talk to Jeff L about updating the maps.
12. 3 - Bowers Springs
 - a. See item 11.e.
 - b. The trail that goes through the new Bartsch gift doesn't correctly line up with the strip of land set aside for it. This isn't an immediate issue, but at some point in the future, the trail will need to be moved to the correct location.

- c. There's a huge amount of bittersweet on the west side of the big pond which needs to be cleared. Please contact Larry if you can help.
13. 4 - Powder House
- a. Several people noted that it's difficult to find the Old Town House Road trail which comes out at the intersection of Sugar and Golden Run roads. Steve said that historically, some people felt having a sign there was a bad idea because there was no parking available. There's just space for two cars (off the pavement on the grassy verge) on Sugar Road opposite the Whitcomb Garrison House site. Drew volunteered to create a sign. It may need to be on a post; there may not be any appropriate trees near the road to put it on.
 - b. Some of the conservation land near Quail Run currently isn't accessible by trails. And there are a bunch of trails in the area which are apparently on private land. A longer term action item is to figure out where the trails are, and if they can be moved and/or new ones created to provide access to more of the space.
 - c. Apparently a landowner is considering donating a house lot off of Quail Run for conservation land. Gordon will ask Rebecca for the status.
 - d. Larry and Gordon started clearing brush at the Whitcomb Garrison House (across Sugar Road from the Old Town House Road trailhead); the work needs to be completed.
 - e. Rebecca is working to get the pile of brush removed.
14. 5 - Zink-Northwoods
- a. The Harvard Conservation Trust land should be shown in green.
 - b. There's Town conservation land in the Northwoods area which isn't shown in green.
15. 6 - Rattlesnake
- a. Steve reported the "Phillips Trail" sign and map labels are wrong, at least historically. Steve believes the "Phillips Trail" is the one which goes by the large boulder with the Phillips plaque, now labeled the Park Bench Trail. He thinks "Park Bench Trail" is a relatively new name, and should be on the next north-south trail to the west. The Phillips Trail sign at intersection 2A would then need to be moved to point to the correct trail.
 - b. There's a trail on the map labeled "Future Trail to Skinner Conservation Area - not marked". Drew reports it's usable, all the way up to Route 117, where there's a guardrail. Drew pointed out that mountain bikers would really like access at that point— they could park across the street at Slater's (which would probably make Slater's very happy— it should certainly create some business). Getting access through the guardrail would be a huge paperwork effort, because that's state-owned. It might be possible to have the trail come out at the Skinner driveway on 117— perhaps Nancy Skinner would support that? That might even be state land along the inside of the guard rail (the state generally owns land for the road past where it's paved). Follow up as a low priority.
16. 7 - Delaney - no items
17. 8 - Annie Moore - no items
18. 9 - Danforth - no items
19. 10 - Randall-Vinger - no items

20. 11 - Gould-White - no items
21. 12 - Welch Pond
 - a. There's a 10 foot wide strip of land owned by the Shartner family between Sawyer Road and the conservation land. So far, discussions about access to Sawyer Road haven't made much progress. The town does have access to West Berlin Road, although that access would be near two houses. This is low priority for now.
22. 13 - Bolton Overlook
 - a. This property might disappear in the 2018 book, since there isn't really much there. See item 25.b below.
 - b. Steve noted that there are a bunch of trails on the private property adjacent to the conservation land, and many people might travel them not understanding they've left the conservation land (like he did).
 - c. Someone wants to donate a bench; this might be a good spot for it. Several people noted that there's an excellent view of the town from here, especially in the fall.
23. 14 - Wilder Pond
 - a. There have been discussions about putting a bridge across the Still River (east of the small pond). There need to be discussions with the private landowners in the area. There's a new 11 home FOSPRD development going in just north of the property; that could impact our plans for the area. Rebecca and Jeff L had some discussions with the landowners in the past. There's been no activity on these issues for some time.
24. 15 - Fyfeshire - no items
25. 16(?) - Houghton Farms
 - a. Jeff was working with National Grid (New England Power) on trail access across their land. The final issue is insurance. Some at the meeting thought that issue was almost resolved. We believe that Rebecca is now following up.
 - b. The tentative plan for the 2018 printed Trails Guide is to replace the Bolton Overlook page with a Houghton Farms page (to keep the number of pages, and therefore cost, the same).