

10.25.16
Meeting Minutes

Trails Discussion
10.24.16 @ 6 pm
Dover Town Office

Attendees: John Gannon, Adam Levine, Andy McLean, Crista Gannon, Mike Purcell, Brendan McGrail, Randy Terk, Royal Wilson, Tim Hunt, Sharon Cunningham, Elia Hamilton, Kelly Pawlak

Why was the meeting held? At a recent Bi Town committee meeting there was a discussion about exploring the "next steps" necessary to move our trail systems forward. It was decided a brainstorming session would be helpful and Jake White, Brandon McGrail, Sharon Cunningham, Randy Terk and Kelly Pawlak volunteered to hold a meeting.

Moderator: Elia Hamilton
Scribe: Kelly Pawlak

Elia started the meeting by asking participants for input and said he was wondering if a trail group should be town or non-profit driven. He also asked for ideas on how to get property owners to let us use their trails.

Mike Purcell:

- Talked about some of his work on trails and the Hoot, Toot and Whistle Club. The trail behind the Twin Valley Elementary School was developed for kids and Mike talked about the need for more modern trail construction that uses more rolling and berm-like features, which is how the new trail at the school is laid out.
- Working with the National Forest System – FS allowing bikes wherever trails are approved for horses.
- Talking to FS about connecting Catamount trail out toward Daley, to Chimney Hill to Valley Trail.
- Talking to FS & VYCC about Ridge Trail – swamp is an area of concern

John Gannon:

- As much as we want it, the paved path from Dover to Wilmington is not going to happen right away due to cost and landowner consent.
- Out West many resorts offer the paved flat rails and the extensive hiking/biking trail network.

Adam Levine:

- A lot of the trails already exist
 - VAST
 - Abandon VAST
 - Class IV roads

- Trails like Hathaway and Town Forests

Sharon Cunningham

- A lot of hikers and bikers stop at Chamber for suggestions. They give out a lot of the Wilmington and Valley Trail maps
- The COC asks what type of trail the party wants and are able to make suggestions to suit all abilities, starting right in downtown Wilmington. Sharon feels we need to get everyone understanding and saying the same thing when it comes to our current trail system, marketing them better and possibly rating our trails.

Andy McLean: Andy shared ideas for a few trails that are on public lands

1. On Handle Rd, above Bears X sign there is a small arm owned by the Forest Service which creates a path to vast FS land. He is talking to FS about putting in a parking lot and road up the little slice of land to gain access to FS land. It has been a very long process but he is moving forward. The FS is more interested if they do not have to incur costs and maintenance.
2. Town has acquired an unbuildable parcel on Blue Brook that backs up to the Town Forest (1400 acres). Could that be used in the future?
3. Andy explained that the local emergency services are concerned about people getting lost. He described a search and rescue team that is being put together. They meet on the 2nd Wed of the month at 6:30 pm at the Dover Fire House. Drew Hazelton is heading this up. Andy encouraged interested parties to attend the next meeting.

Crista Gannon:

- Would like to see the Wilmington Trails and Valley Trail maps available electronically, for use on your phone. She described that printing maps is cost prohibitive and worries that a map that illustrates all of the trails in Dover and Wilmington would be too large or the scaled too small to provide a benefit to a hiker.

Tim Hunt:

- Is our purpose to bring people to the Valley? To create a destination?
- Where do we put our efforts?
- Do we have enough trails, if trail use increases?
- Can we include a pinnacle view as a point of differentiation?

Randy Terk:

- Listed several strengths, weaknesses and opportunities – see SWOT below

SWOT Analysis

Strengths: Valley offers a variety of trails, from paved to strenuous. Local option tax helps to fund. Paved Valley Trail and the Valley Trail from Wilmington to Dover.

Weaknesses: Lack of connectivity, lacking inventory of who owns what. No wheeled vehicles allowed on VAST trails as it is a lot of private land. Need

more public trail access. Need an inventory of all trails, including what type of trail they are and a rating system. Some of the current trails lack proper markings. Valley Trail ends short of Carinthia, Mount Snow and all of the lodging in the base area.

Opportunities: Develop an inventory of trails. Develop a plan that will attract people to our area. Figure out what we can do now and what we can work towards in the future. Develop a good trail system that will attract more business owners. Explore working with and using Forest Service lands, snowmobile trails and town forests. Develop trails and/or connectors that travel through the woods, are smooth with good drainage. Develop a trail system that increases property values.

Threats: Permitting, landowner liability

How should we progress?

- A group of interested individuals
- Not business based
- Not town based
- Doesn't mean businesses or towns cannot be involved
- Look at outing club model?
- HT & W chapter (Mike Purcell) of the VT Mtn Bike Assoc?
- Look at BAT (Bennington Area trails) VMBA chapter – they have received grants.

Next Steps:

- Create an inventory of trails. Kelly will send out draft of inventory she has been creating. Anyone with input/edits can make them or send them to Kelly for updates.
- Need to decide what area (location) to focus on. Elia suggested we start in the middle and work out.
- Need to decide what the group looks like. Non-profits are expensive and time consuming to start up. Can we work with a local 501c3 like the Wilmington Fund?
- Elia will draw up his "dream trail system" on google maps and send to everyone
- Need a name for the group – something like Community Trails Interest Group.
- Next meeting: Monday, Nov 28, 6pm. Location TBD. Andy will see if we can meet at the Dover Town Office again.
- Brendan McGrail will write a press release about our meeting with an invite to the next meeting.
- Kelly will work with Towns to warn the next meeting.