

**Draft Minutes of the
Hartford Land Management Subcommittee
11/17/16**

Attendance: The following individuals attended the meeting which was held at the Hartford Town Hall at 171 Bridge Street, White River Junction on Thursday, November 17, 2016.

Subcommittee Members: Jon Bouton, Tom Kahl, Chuck Wooster and chair Mary Hutchins.

Staff: Parks and Recreation Department Director Tad Nunez and Planner Matt Osborn.

Others: None.

Chair Mary Hutchins called the meeting to order at 7:11 p.m. Jon Bouton announced that Conservation Commission member Karen Douville stepped down from the Commission in August and her spot on the LMS is now represented by HCC member Tom Kahl. Jon apologized for the long gap between meetings. At our last meeting we adjourned with a task of creating more accurate parcel boundary and trails map. This took longer than expected and then the Conservation Commission decided to add the wetlands information used in the wetlands agreement with the State (Maxfield Sports Complex Act-250 permit). This is done. Introductions were made.

Matt Osborn briefly reviewed the list of previous six LMS meetings and two site visits.

Chuck Wooster noted that there has been tension between the mountain bike community and the Conservation Commission. He asked the Committee what the mountain bikers want to achieve with the LMS process. Jon Bouton believes that the mountain bikers probably want to continue to use and take care of the trails in the Town Forest. He added that they would like to be welcomed users and not be mired in bureaucracy. Chuck stated that we need to get to the point where mountain bikers are welcomed users of the Town Forest and to foster stewardship of the trails. Tad Nunez agreed adding that we need to work together to protect this beautiful property. Jon stated that he wants to welcome the mountain bikers and work together. Tad noted that the Town Forest, like many other public lands means different things to different people which can create conflicts with various user groups. Tad noted that a colleague of his in Rutland dealt with mountain bike trails and community conflict. They evaluated the trails and in some cases rebuilt sections. The result is a well-designed and sustainable trail system that is valued by the community. We can do the same in the Town Forest.

Jon Bouton suggested starting with the framework to accept the mountain bike trails then develop a process where trails are evaluated and then some sections decommissioned or rerouted. Jon stated that speaking for himself and not on behalf of the Conservation Commission, He had a list of concerns and thoughts to move things forward.

1. Start with the trails mapped by Brian Riordan (data from Strava App users). Other mountain bike trails would be decommissioned. The HCC would entertain making additional trails part of the official trails network through a process.
2. The trails need to be sustainable. Jon suggests adhering to the standards of the International Mountain Bike Association (IMBA). Matt Osborn noted that the Upper Valley Trails Alliance recommends the IMBA standards. Jon said that he would like to get assistance from the Upper Valley Mountain Bike Association or the Upper Valley Trails Alliance to examine the trails and improve them where necessary over time. He noted that examination, improvements and other maintenance will take some time.

3. Trails should avoid wetlands. He showed photographs of trails where organic soil has been worn away exposing tree roots. Relocate the trail that runs through the northern and southern vernal pools. For trails that cross other wetlands, build small bridges to reduce impacts on the wetlands.
4. Regularly maintain Reservoir Road. Jon noted that the Hartford Highway Department worked on Reservoir Road this summer and it was a big improvement.
5. Provide information to Town Forest users at the kiosk, which was recently repaired by Eagle Scout candidate Connor Chandler.
6. 100 acre unfragmented block for wildlife. Jon Bouton suggested a compromise incorporating the Town Forest and a portion of the Hurricane Forest Wildlife Refuge. To accomplish this, he suggested decommissioning the east end of the WB Brown Trail (would require approval of the Parks and Recreation Commission) as well as the lower portion of Pine Drop and the Legacy Trail to create an area predominantly free of trails. He noted that Simonds Way would remain.

Tad Nunez said that it seems like a good compromise. He stated that it is all about stewardship of the property, noting that the Town Forest is under the oversight and stewardship of the Conservation Commission. Chuck agreed and stated that we need to protect the forest, noting that it is reasonable and makes sense to have standards. He stated that we want this to be a wonderful place that is enjoyed by all and that we need to reassure the mountain bikers that they are welcomed users. Tom Kahl stated that the residents have a vested interest in the future of the Town Forest.

Next Steps: Members of the LMS committee will be reaching out to the mountain bike community to share the outcome of the meeting.

Next Meeting: It was agreed to hold the next meeting after the holidays.

The meeting adjourned at 8:44 p.m.