

## Minutes of Town Forest Committee meeting October 2, 2014, Story Memorial Hall

Members in attendance: Dennis Lemire, Rudy Gross, Laura Stillson, Cathy Boedtke and Jim Lyall

Public Attendees: none

1. Meeting called to order: 6:35 p.m.

2. Cathy and Dennis said that they had issues to discuss in Other Business.

3. Minutes of the previous meetings were read and discussed. Cathy said that she had not been at the last meeting, but was surprised to see, in the minutes, a discussion of the State park trail and possible extension into Weathersfield, when these trails are none of the committee's business. Jim said that although the trails were built and maintained by STAB and Vermont Dept of Forests Parks and Recreation, they are a part of the network that will be marketed as Ascutney Trails, and the town committee should know about them.

4. No public comment.

5. Trail Report: Jim reported that Blue Dipper board walk was rebuilt. STAB and Tom Tom volunteer crews worked on Broadway and Fifth Avenue trails on two different days. VT50 came through 3 miles of our trails. Some erosion on starting downhill section of Falls Trail - braking on over-dry trail caused dust to be raised. Short section of Ease Up collapsed as bikers avoided a root - this can be easily repaired. Rudy remarked about some erosion near gravel pit and near quarry. He and Jim will visit the spots.

6. Act 250 Amendment progress : Jim sent Bridge designs and site photos plus map files to SWRPC. Continuing problems with opening PDF files.

7. A motion was made to build a picnic area near the TF parking lot, but due to concerns about inviting trash, it was unanimously rejected.

8. We will be going forward with existing map data, with GPS data being collected and added as needed. Laura will look into borrowing GPS unit from SWRPC to map the Bicentennial Trail route.

9. Other business:

Cathy - With acquisition being considered, the TFC should consider staging some events to put TF in positive light and to raise money for future needs - like contribution to the trail grant and the land acquisition. The committee discussed the amount that might be coming from our fund for the acquisition, and whether the committee should have been consulted.

- We should post that trails or features should not be built without permission.

Jim suggested that we wait until it seems to be a problem.

Dennis - We should determine if the trails are an economic driver, and we should stop funding with tax dollars soon. How close is it to being self-sustaining and requiring users to pay to play?

Because there is as yet no definitive answer on land ownership, no marketing has been done, and no non-profit organization has been formed to run it. The traffic so far has not been sufficient to pay someone to collect fees.

Laura - without the events on mountain the General Store would be out of business.

Rudy - get them and Orange Lakes to state it in a letter.

Dennis - If the condos become more popular due to the trails, the values will go up and tax rate down, helping everyone, whereas the General Store is a private enterprise. Jim pointed out that regardless, it is the center of the town, and growing businesses pay

more taxes.

The town does not want to run the trails - some entity will employ maintenance people, and cover those costs with very little, if any, input from the town. Right now those trails can disappear in a month, so no one wants to invest in the trails or marketing or amenities or related businesses (bike shop, pub, B&B, etc.).

Dennis - our budget went up a lot due to renewed interest in the Town Forest, and need for plan, survey, parking lot, etc.

Cathy - the committee should give support to the acquisition, but we can't vote on it without it being on the agenda.

10. The meeting was adjourned at 8:06.

Respectfully submitted, Jim Lyall, TFC Secretary