

Minutes of the Shutesbury Recreation Committee Meeting

November 7, 2018, 7:00 PM

Open meeting to discuss town hiking trails, followed by Committee meeting

Present: Rita Farrell, BZ Reilly, Christine Robinson, Christine Marglin, Elizabeth Fernandez O'Brien (Committee members); Ralf Kohler, Libby Kohler, Gary Donnelly, Jay Alpert, Nancy Matthews, Herb Hayack, Jeanne Brown, Huckle May.

Rita and Gary presented work they have done to map the Houston and Gage Trail off Sand Hill Road, that is one of two trail maps just posted to the town website this week. Gary brought hard copies of the map.

Rita described the Committee's activities to date to respond to interest in the town in seeing a guide to trail hikes in Shutesbury, similar to what has been done in Leverett. The committee determined that the best course was to map two or three hikes, publish these maps on the town website. Members of the Committee and other interested residents have done several hikes and begun creating detailed informational maps. One of the trails, Ames Pond/Mount Mineral, that was intended to be mapped at this time, presented challenges that made it unfeasible to be mapped at this time, chiefly the fact the trail crosses private land and there are questions about accessing it, so it has been put on hold.

While the first goal was to highlight a few trail maps on the town website, there are further goals to produce paper maps and to better mark the trails themselves, with postings at trail heads, and there are potentially many trails to be mapped in town.

Along with Gary Donnelly, Ralf and Libby Kohler and Elizabeth and Bert have put time into mapping the trails and creating maps to date, with the intention to create a template for further mapping and to demonstrate the kind of information valuable for people accessing the trails.

Gary explained that he provided basic directions with his map, including how to find the trail head from the intersection of Sand Hill and West Pelham Roads, noting that it is easy to drive past the trail without seeing it.

Nancy asked: How did this come into existence and is it on private property. Gary explained that the trail is within the town of Amherst watershed, which maintains it, and is well marked. BZ explained that we are trying to avoid private property at this time, Nancy asked how many trails exist in town, and whether trails are on state or town land. How many trails? There are many trails, some public, some within Shutesbury State forest land, some crossing private lands, and part of our challenge is that we don't always know who all the landowners are. Bert notes that some trails go through land trusts, some through land owned by Cowls, and that Cowls permits public access to its lands if used respectfully. Nancy notes that it would be good to have a comprehensive map of town trails. Jeanne wondered about the legal restrictions to accessing trails, and Rita pointed out that hikers could be trespassing, explaining that this is part of our hesitation in creating maps and publicizing trails. Snow mobile trails exist on private land, and snow mobile groups have received permission for their trails.

The question was raised about whether there is a data base of landowners and trails.

BZ notes that there is a map showing some of the many trails in town, and that copies would be made available to anyone who wants one. In the interests of creating a master plan of open space and trails, we have taken the first steps by going out and beginning to mark public trails.

Gary reported that the Houston and Gage Trail is a loop trail, 1.7 miles on a parcel of 250 acres, a relatively easy trail up and down in woods, with a part along a power line that is the steepest portion of the trail, one part eroded and potentially hazardous, with good signage, white signs, trees blazed with yellow, that goes through wet areas, logs out over streams that are rotting away in some cases, with views through power lines, and easy to navigate. The trail include offshoots that are unmarked, one hugging Dean Brook, with flat rocks good for picnicking or resting. There is very limited parking for this trail, perhaps three spaces on Sand Hill Road. Parking spaces are one of the details important to note in publicizing town trails, as many have very little parking available.

Along with Houston and Gage, the Lake Wyola/Fiske Pond trail mapped by Elizabeth and Bert is now up on the town website. Embedded in the descriptions of the trails are topographical maps and photographs.

It is the committee's intention to return to the trails at some point and better mark them, hopefully with the help of volunteers from the town.

Christine R handed out an earlier draft of the Lake Wyola/Fiske Pond map now up on the website. Bert said he had found another part of trail that could be done as a loop, some 2.1 miles, that crosses private property. The trail crosses conservation land in Wendell, and though there are blazes on trees to mark the trail, there are many trails there, and it's easy to get confused and lost.

Those attending the meeting were invited to suggest other trails the committee could map at this time, as well as suggestions for improving the first two maps.

Huckle described a near his town accessed from Randall Road and Old Wendell Road that may intersect town land and logging roads and that includes three loops. It is used by mountain bikers as well as hikers, and includes a hemlock forest and streams.

It was arranged that Huckle will lead any members of the committee able to make it in this hike on Sunday, November 18 at 2 pm, meeting at the town beach parking lot on Randall Road.

There was a suggestion to map the Bushy Mountain Trail, and it was agreed that this trail could be highlighted but it is already mapped. The question of who has published this map was raised. Cows owns the land but allows public access and they may have received funding from the state and possibly from Kestrel Trust. This can be determined by talking with Becky.

Paper copies of our maps can be printed for the library, and the existence of maps can be publicized in Roadtown News and on Nextdoor Shutesbury.

Another trail was mentioned that is accessed from New Boston Road, has a lot of parking, and includes a long loop near the lake. It is popular with mountain bikers and horse back riders.

Christine M mentioned reported that she was messaged through Nextdoor Shutesbury by a mountain biker who wants to know if these trails will be accessible to bikers. Both the trails we have mapped thus far are open to bikers, as well as those under discussion. The town resident

asking about biking also mentioned that the New England Mountain Bike Association might be a good resource for us in mapping and maintaining trails.

Rita mentioned that another next step is blazing trails and we'd love help from interested people to do that. We will post online when we are blazing and people can get involved.

Jeanne mentioned that she uses trails off Baker, Schoolhouse and West Pelham Roads that are well marked, have no hunting signs, signs indicating the way to a beaver dam, etc. These trails are suitable for cross country ski or snow shoeing, and are family friendly, and could be marked with recommendations for families, for skiers, etc. These trails may intersect Cowls land and Sirius Community land and Baker Reservoir. The question was raised about whether Sirius has maps of its trails.

Jeanne suggested setting up a Google spreadsheet of all available information about trails.

We will have another meeting, to be scheduled, to continue this discussion.

Other towns and trails are blazed in white, yellow, and red, we will have to decide what color to use. Also, when mapping trails it is important to distinguish between length and difficulty of hikes and to indicate both variables.

Town participants left the meeting at 8:15, and the committee met to discuss other business. Minutes from the previous, October 22, meeting were approved by a motion from Elizabeth, seconded by BZ and agreed by all.

Classes for strength training and yoga will be continued after their library sponsorship ends with Thanksgiving if feasible.

Rita presented the results of a survey of current class participants indicating interest in continuing and paying for classes. We will attempt to continue one strength training class and therapeutic yoga with Kathy Sward, and gentle yoga with Sasha Rivera. Both are available to continue teaching. Kathy is available Thursday mornings to do two classes, at 9:30 and 11.

We will attempt to get enough people to sign up for and pay up front for four weeks of these classes at \$5 per class, with classes beginning the Wednesday and Thursday after Thanksgiving. If we do not get enough to cover the costs of paying Kathy \$65-70 per class and Sasha \$50 per class, we will not continue.

The four week sessions would begin November 28 and 29 and end December 19 and 20. It is possible that another four week session could begin after the new year.

Kathy would like to be notified if people not coming so that she does not set up unnecessarily for class.

The classes will be announced next week, posted on Nextdoor Shutesbury by Rita and on the library's Facebook page by BZ. Christine R will make an announcement at strength training classes this week.

Elizabeth will ask Mary Anne for a master list of class participants and send it to BZ; Kathy will be asked for her list of participants. There will be a deadline of November 21 for people to send

or bring in registration and payment. Rita will let Kathy know and Elizabeth will let Sasha know that they will know about the classes continuing, and people who have signed up will be notified if classes are going forward.

Meeting adjourned at 8:50 pm.