

Friends of North Andover Trails

Meeting Minutes – 27 April 2016

Attendance: 11 members

Membership: No new members. We have not yet sent out an annual reminder to renew membership. Glen to complete this action item.

Treasury: In the absence of our treasurer, the monthly report was circulated for review. The trail guide was our biggest source of revenue (\$2,580). As we ordered production of more trail guides, it was also our biggest expense (\$2,760). Overall, we still have a healthy bank balance (~\$11k).

Guidebooks: Stan offered to take over the tracking of stores/inventory from Glen. Glen gratefully accepted the help. No details were discussed.

Kiosks: Glen provided an update on kiosk posters: six almost ready for printing, including new photos provided by Deb. Glen will install them in kiosks, once he has procured a key from the conservation agent. The issue of outdated kiosk content was discussed, but thought not to be too much of a problem. The conservation commission will help fund construction of a new kiosk at Stevens Estate by a scout. Most people are in favor of a standard kiosk design for all new kiosks. Glen has sent a link for the Appalachian Trail Conservancy for their design to the conservation agent. There was also interest in seeing the design in use in Wellesley for their local trailheads. The Shawsheen trail kiosk has been installed and is ready to add Jim's new roof. He needs help and use of a trailer to transport the material; the date to be determined.

Trails: Most of the trails are in reasonably good shape. Poor turn-out for the April maintenance work day in James Swamp trails, but the trail area needing work was brushed out and cleaned of debris/limbs. This improved trail will avoid the need to walk across the athletic fields. Bruin Hill trail needs to be better defined, with a brush out and more markers. Adding loops to both sides of the power lines was discussed and agreed to add this to the 2016 goals. Greenbelt will need to agree. A new trail on Leonhard's Farm (Dale/Glendale area) is being planned by Greenbelt once the CR is finalized; FONAT and BTA-BOLT will jointly maintain these new trails.

After the trails discussion, it was decided that the May work day will be focused on re-establishing the Cyr Athletic area trails.

Monitoring: The "adopt a trail" program is up/running with only a few trails yet to be adopted. The on-line form is now available on FONAT.org. To date this spring, reports on James Swamp, Bruin Hill, Maruzenko Farms, Windrush Farms, and the Cyr Athletic area have been submitted. Not all used the on-line form. The first Girl Scout troop (7-8 years) has been assigned a part of the Bay Circuit Trail in HPSF with a May date agreed for "training".

Other: Nancy (from BTA-BOLT) asked for and received support to re-start a group supporting improvements in the Bald Hill Reservation (3,000 acres). She asked that a representative from FONAT be appointed. Mike agreed to be the FONAT rep.

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Leadership: Greenbelt G.O.A.T. leadership training program was reviewed. All thought it was excellent. Many general topics discussed. One suggestion was limiting group size by using sign-ups. FONAT has had good experience in handling large groups and didn't want to limit participation. We usually have sufficient additional help to support most group sizes. Large groups tend to spread out; leader's pace or stopping to discuss interesting trail information is critical to keeping the group together. Being proactive in helping weaker hikers is important to avoid injuries. Another was good communications between the "front/back" of large groups and needing something other than cell phones; Mike offered the use of his 2-way walkie-talkies. Sweep is very important; if there is only one leader then it should be in the back of the group. First aid kits are usually being carried by Mike/Liz but not all others. A suggestion of making a FONAT first aid pack (or two) that any leader or co-leader could use was agreed. The need for a wrap-up session at the end of hike was discussed. We all want this – to sell FONAT membership, trail guides, next month's walk, etc., but we have had trouble getting the group to stay assembled. Something more than brownies is needed. Another option is to get feedback by sending out an email follow-up. Most people wanted the more immediate wrap-up versus an email.

Since we want to expand the number of leaders/co-leaders, Liz and Mike will draft some simple guidelines for new leaders. Greenbelt is tackling something similar.

New Business/Discussion

April 30 – DPW Table: Stan and Maryann will man this. Lots happening on the 30th.

May Trail Workday: Will be in the Cyr Athletic area, re-establishing existing trails.

May 15th Hike/Paddle: Several problems with the monthly walk were discussed. Logistics of both a walk and a paddle are unwieldy. The Shawsheen River is very low in this area. There is not easy access to the river. Extra people will be needed just to watch the kayaks/canoes. There were concerns about the condition of the trail. Suggestion of having just a short walk followed by a picnic was made. Mike and Glen will walk the area and make a final decision on what to do.

May 17th Chat with Town Manager: This will be the FONAT monthly meeting. There was a lot of interest in having the new town planner attend to discuss status of "community trail" and pedestrian crossing at BCT/Route 114. Glen will prepare some slides on FONAT's role in conservation and town trails.

May 22nd Sheep Shearing Festival: FONAT will have a table. Glen is looking for volunteers.

Clean-up Day: We would like to find a date to clean-up the entrance to the Boxford State Forest (Sharpner's Pond Road parking) and adjacent areas. May is getting crowded.

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2016 Goals: A draft proposal was circulated, discussed and suggested revisions made.

Some key areas: improved conditions, signage and wetland crossings on Mazurenko Farms; re-establishing the trails in the Cyr Athletic area; adding loop trails to the Bruin Hills area; establishing the “adopt a trail” program; forming a new group to construct boardwalks and other structures; progress a 2nd edition of the trail guide.

Mazurenko Farms: Work has been done on some of the trails – brushing out and removing downed trees. Steve has volunteered to lead the efforts to replacing/expanding the current wetlands crossing, including filing an RDA.

Construction Group: Mike will take the lead in establishing this group with help from Jim, Rob and others. Mike will be the point person for gaining conservation commission approvals.

Action Items:

1. **Glen:** To send out an annual renewal reminder to members.
2. **Stan:** To assume the responsibility for tracking the stores/trail guide inventory.
3. **Liz:** To send the Wellesley kiosk design to Stan and Rob.
4. **Stan:** To maintain a link to all Scout trail projects.
5. **Jim:** Set a date in May for installing the roof on the Shawsheen trail kiosk.
6. **Tom:** To organize the May 7th workday in the CYR athletic area.
7. **Mike/Liz:** To draft a summary of key points for new leaders and co-leaders.
8. **Mike/Glen:** To decide on the May monthly walk.
9. **Mike:** To decide on a clean-up date for BSF entrance area.
10. **Liz:** To revise and issue the 2016 goals, per the discussion.