

E. Local Trails Meeting Agendas and Meeting Summaries

(see attached)

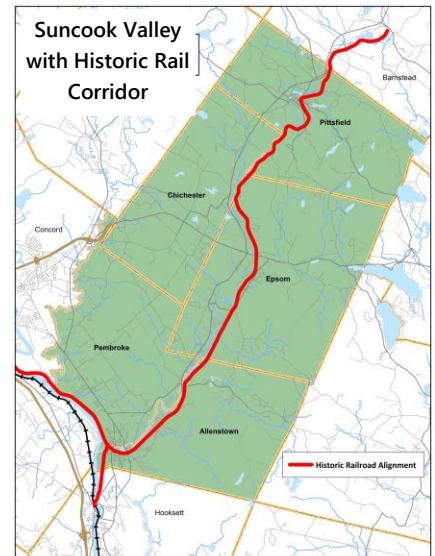
SUNCOOK VALLEY TRAILS

Visioning Session

6:00 PM

Wednesday, January 16, 2019

Epsom Public Library, 1606 Dover Road, Epsom



AGENDA

1. Welcome and Introduction
2. Suncook Valley Trails Planning Initiative
3. Information Sharing Discussions
 - ✦ How do you use the trails?
 - ✦ What is missing from your trail experiences?
 - ✦ Ideas for area-wide trails connections?
4. Continuation of Your Input and Future Meetings
5. Maps: Participants Invited to Draw Your Specific Trails Interests

Thank you for your participation tonight!

Please consider filling out a **Trails Experiences Questionnaire** if you'd like to share more details.

Central New Hampshire
Regional Planning
Commission

28 Commercial Street, Suite 3
Concord, NH 03301

603.226.6020
www.cnhrpc.org



For more information, please contact Stephanie Alexander at the CNHRPC
at 226-6020 or salexander@cnhrpc.org.

Suncook Valley Trails Visioning Session
1/16/19, Epsom Town Library, 6 -7PM
Meeting Notes

31 attendees counted, plus CNHRPC Staff

Meeting opened at 7PM

Mike Tardiff, executive director of CNHRPC, opened the meeting with a brief introduction. He described CNHRPC's overall mission and some of the programs it manages, including the transportation program where this project fits in. Mike mentioned that this project ties back to what we hear from towns - interest in trails and how to develop, create multi-use opportunities, and particularly, how to work on rail trails. CNHRPC has developed other similar plans such as the West Central Rails Plan. He pointed out that it can be a long commitment, need sustained communication, etc. Tonight is first step for Suncook Valley. After tonight, ideas will be generated on how to move forward with the plan.

Mike asked that attendees introduce themselves, identify any affiliation and share any concerns

Stephanie Alexander, CNHRPC staff, then described role of RPC in this project, including coordination and making connections and identifying recommendations and strategies that benefit everyone.....that is why we invited a diverse group to join us. She described the evening's agenda and handouts, particularly the questionnaire. She asked participants to fill it out tonight or to email to her at a later date. Stephanie also mentioned that there will be meetings in each of the towns over the duration of the project.

Craig Tufts, CNHRPC staff, talked about the project initiative. He described other rail trail projects in NH. Craig reviewed the trail in general, highlighting different parts of it and where there is some activity in the towns along the trail. Question he posed to the group is: what should we do along this rail trail? Some activities and opportunities include: the trail in Pittsfield that goes through downtown and school; town owns property; Chichester has a project in the 10 year transportation plan for improvements where the rail trail is nearby. Epsom owns part of the rail corridor; behind the school and close to Bear Brook State Park. Craig also mentioned that this trail could be part of a longer trail network. Craig also stressed that private property concerns along the trails need to be acknowledged and addressed. The project needs to be inclusive of all groups and users of the trail, including the snowmobile clubs; broad diversity of interest in use of the trail.

Craig then asked for comments from participants.

Snowmobile club members pointed out that when they use the trails, the ground is frozen, nearby landowners' windows are closed, etc. There is an advantage that it's winter; biggest question is how do you shut off the use as it closes. Other comments stressed that you need communication with landowners often to address any concern as it happens.

Other comments concerned Class Vi roads - one participant said that you can't limit use. Others mentioned the Range roads and that Pembroke has seasonal closings. Craig mentioned Class VI is a public way and they are roads that the town or city has no duty to maintain but can be maintained privately. Black Hall Road was mentioned by a participant and noted that the NH Division of Forest and Lands require permission for this road. There is a booth at Black Hall Road/Allenstown.

Others mentioned that there are snowmobiles trails through to Chichester. Issue is landowner concern can be more prevalent in summer; winter is easier. Everyone needs to talk to landowners, perhaps as a group - it is important that all users talk to each other and coordinate interaction with landowners.

Craig asked if there are areas of connectivity gaps right now for snowmobilers? One participant mentioned that sometimes gates will be closed if a landowner decides there is not enough snow or there has been some other concern.

A participant from Chichester mentioned that there was interest in linking some of the town buildings - library, town hall. A group started to work on landowner permission....challenge is piecing together landowners to make it work. Chair of trails committee, Pittsfield, spoke about Tilton Hill; got major landowners to agree to use but one landowner held it up. Others mentioned RTP funds and that they don't allow motorized trails; e bikes aren't considered motorized. RTP will be having meetings in spring.

Another comment was that money is a big motivator - could towns give tax relief to landowners who grant permission? Others weren't aware that there was any mechanism other than the state's current use law.

Others asked question about liability of property owners who allow recreation use? A participant noted that NH has strong waivers but that won't necessarily prevent users from suing the landowner. Others mentioned that the Trails Bureau is a good resource on this issue.

ATV use was mentioned as an issue. ATV users have to follow rules; need to have permission. Can't use it without permission. Some mentioned that this issue is a "10" with snowmobilers. Users should be affiliated with clubs so that users are aware of rules.

The question was asked: How do you educate people about this issue? Most users think it's okay... signage could help....but there is user responsibility to follow the rules. Others mentioned that there needs to be signs or police can't enforce. Trails bureau keeps record of trails from clubs.

Craig asked: Should we focus in Epsom? Some participants said that the Rail Trail in Epsom is only 2-3 miles; rest is private and there are infrastructure issues. PSNH easement through Pembroke could be multi use.

Craig: Who else should be involved? Epsom - Athletic Fields; school board

Need to keep people informed- share information going forward

At 7PM, Craig invited participants to join staff at the tables to look more closely at the maps.

Meeting informally adjourned at 7:38PM

Notes taken by Joanne Cassulo, CNHRPC.

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6:00 PM

Wednesday, January 16, 2019

Epsom Public Library, 1606 Dover Road, Epsom

AGENDA

3. Information Sharing Discussions

- ✦ How do you use the trails?
- ✦ What is missing from your trail experiences?
- ✦ Ideas for area-wide trails connections?

Transcription of Attendee Comments from Easel Pad

- **Epsom Black Hall Road**- Motorized summer uses may not be appropriate.
- Concern on behalf of landowners about summer access to the permitted, winter mapped snowmobiles trails.
- **Pembroke**- Seasonal roads (spring, Class VI) closed to preserve roads. Some Class VI road landowners have private maintenance concerns.
- **Epsom Black Hall Road** – Town had to obtain permission from NH Division of Natural and Cultural Resources Forest and Land Management for Bear Brook Toll Booth.
- Multi-use trails- summer use landowners are hesitant to allow.
- What is multi-use? Trail User Groups need to talk to Snowmobile Clubs first.
- Sometimes users go off-trail. Must respect the landowners who open trails to the public.
- **Chichester**- Wanted to link many features with existing trails, began to obtain landowner permission for walking on 1 segment. ATVs misused those trails, now closed by landowners.
- **Pittsfield Tilton Hill Road Railbed**- Most landowners on board, but contacts lost. Had been Town owned land, 1 is private land now.
- **Pittsfield**- Creative trail protection possible.

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- Recreational Trails Program- No motorized grant money; Motorbikes run on batteries, not gas, and are not considered motorized (referenced Chris Gamache as source).
- **NH Trail Dawgs**- Bridge application for RPT this year, summer non-motorized use for trails is ok.
- Landowner incentives must be provided (such as trails grants).
- Trails Bureau resource is available for property deed writing (snowmobiles).
- ATVs are greatest snowmobile problem, a 10 on a 1-10 scale. Must have permission from owners. Trail signage is often removed. All motorized roads/trails closed by default unless permission granted.
- OHRV enforcement is very difficult.
- Winter/summer trails need appropriate usage for different trail users. Landowner permission for use is necessary and respectful. Snowmobile Clubs need to have long term commitments with landowners, spend money for them/on their land.
- More \$ resources and people resources are needed for rail trails.
- **Pembroke/Allenstown/Hooksett**- Old railbed could become Rail Trail with bridges-possibilities.
- Northern Rail Road upkeep (state-owned).
- UNH Trails Mapping via drones – who?
- Sometimes mountain bike damage occurs on trails but not horse damage.



SUNCOOK VALLEY TRAILS MEETING

Town of Epsom

Tuesday, April 2, 2019

6:00 PM

Epsom Town Office Meeting Room, 940 Suncook Valley Highway

AGENDA

1. Introductions
2. Overview of the Suncook Valley Trails Plan Project
3. Discuss Potential Epsom Rail Trail (with Map)
 - a. Review Existing Conditions and Uses of Former Rail Bed
 - b. Identify Opportunities and Challenges
 - c. Develop an Overall Vision for Suncook Valley Railroad Bed
 - d. Identify 1 Achievable Rail Trail Project and/or Strategies for Trails Use (if any)
4. Discuss Other Local Trails and Trail Connections in Epsom (with Map)
 - a. Review Existing Trails and Uses
 - b. Discuss Desired Trail Connections (Regional and to Former Railbed)
 - c. Identify Future Achievable Projects (if any)
5. Next Steps

To stay informed, visit the new **Suncook Valley Trails Plan** website at
<http://cnhrpc.org/suncook-valley-trails-plan/>

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SUNCOOK VALLEY TRAILS MEETING

Town of Epsom

April 2, 2019 | 6:00 PM, Epsom Town Office Meeting Room | 940 Suncook Valley Highway

Meeting Summary

In attendance: **Glenn Horner**, Epsom EDC/Trails Subcommittee (walk/bike), Zoning Board; **Denyce Gagne**, Epsom Resident/former Cons Comm (walk); **Roxan Chasse**, Epsom Resident (horse); **Barb Barksdale**, Epsom Resident (horse); **Jenn Drew**, Epsom Resident (horse); **Abby Aucella**, Barrington (horse, hike, bike); **Sandy Hurd**, Loudon (horse); **Donna Michaud**, Strafford (horse); **Debbie Briscoe**, Brentwood/NH Horse Council (horse). CNHRPC Staff **Craig Tufts** and **Stephanie Alexander**.

Craig (CNHRPC) led introductions and asked everyone to describe their interest in Epsom trails.

The group had a brief discussion about recent proposed horse/equestrian legislation originating in Strafford because of horse piles left on public surfaces. The introduced legislation has been shown to be non-effective from all segments. Glenn (Epsom) said he wrote a letter to the editor of Concord Monitor about it.

Abby (Barrington)- Would love to see overnight accommodations camping for a week -long trip for horse rides.

Another commented on her interest in long trails and connections, not short segments, where horses can go. She noted she was also a walker and rode bicycles.

Roxan (Epsom)- Own acres on River Road and said a snowmobile trail runs through her property for which she gave permission. Horse owners not always welcomed on snowmobile trails and she would like to see them welcomed by landowners.

Debbie (Brentwood)- Is a NH Horse Council member, NH Trails Advisory Committee and has passion for town trails, likes to watch out for the horse interests. She expressed an interest in the planning component of trails and would like to see connectivity for trails with signage and access throughout NH.

Sandy (Loudon)- Organizes up to 15 trail rides per year for which she and members need to pay to ride in specific locations. Snowmobile trails are available but are not used for horses. She would like to see more signed, connected trails open to horses. Craig directed her to Loudon Trails Committee.

Barb (Epsom) - Lives across the river and is a proponent for horses. She described how several years ago, she tried to organize horse owners to talk to snowmobile clubs for collaboration, but there was no interest. She had previously owned 2 tracts of Epsom land containing snowmobile trails that she made accessible for multi-use, but the partnership did not succeed. She noted the snowmobile clubs put in much work to set up and maintain their trails network and landowner relations, and she would be happy to help do the same thing for horseback riding. There are few places for horses to ride. A police officer told her horses were illegal on the road and she

informed him of the law (horse is a pedestrian if led, a vehicle if being ridden). Landowner indemnity and liability can be large issues. In the area a decade ago, many properties were closed to because of an injured hunter who did not obtain the owner's permission to use the property.

The group held a discussion that legislation is good for liability now, but perception is out there. Those landowner liability questions will come up when talking with landowners. Educating riders and property owners is a high priority for all types of trail uses.

There were general questions about what public activities were allowable under current use lands, and why horse activities were not included. Stephanie (CNHRPC) said there are different categories of current use and landowners can still post their land to deny certain public uses, as the land is still privately owned. Since current use laws change, she suggested checking the NH Department of Revenue Administration website regarding current use land owner posting.

Jenn (Epsom) – Enjoys riding Barb's horses.

Denyce (Epsom) – Is an avid hiker and dog walker. Former Coms Comm member. She has been working with Glenn on a potential trails project to connect Webster Park to the Epsom Baptist Church.

Glenn- Is a member of the Epsom Zoning Board, and the Economic Development Committee. He wanted to become involved with trails and worked with Denyce to map the southern end of rail trail in Epsom. He noted trail system brings trail users and business. As a former Conservation Commission member, he would like to see more outdoor activities available to people in Town.

Craig said that CNHRPC is listening to what the Suncook Valley Trails (SVT) towns have to say about a potential rail trail and connections, and are collecting feedback from public to develop an overall plan that contains recommendations for Towns to pursue. He said he will remain available as a resource to assist Towns with project but that it's up to the Town to develop the projects and maintain them. He said the focus on the SVT is because of the resurgence of rail trails in the state. The Concord to Lake Sunapee Rail Trail initiative is in a similar situation as to what has happened over time to the SVT, with the rail abandoned and reverted to landowners or used as highways. Craig defined trails as publicly accessible trails for the purposes of this SVT Plan, with connectivity and economic development. Any new trails would have to be formalized and should work together with other trails clubs and landowners. The objective of the SVT Plan is not to infringe upon the existing informal trails and official snowmobile trail network, but to collaborate.

Debbie mentioned where the SVT "trail" or potential trails exist, most of the sections will run through private properties. Crag said the challenge is to find a way around the barriers. He introduced the **SVT Working Map for Epsom**, indicated where the known snowmobile trails are, other trails, and where the public areas are located. The attendees sat around the map and referred to it for the remainder of the meeting.

The group discussed potential opportunity areas in Epsom, but noted parking for horse trailers could be an issue. Glenn said that he was able to work out a deal with the Epsom Bible Church for snowmobile trailer parking

and may be able to work out a similar arrangement for horse trailers too. This area could be a great connection to the Tarlton Road Epsom Town Forest trails.

The group considered connectivity issues and possibilities on the map. Since the Suncook River avulsion washed away a lot of the sand for riding along Huckins Road and under the bridge, horses and pedestrians no longer have access. This large washout erased the rail bed, eliminating a critical connection from the main section of Town- owned rail bed to Route 4. The challenges for trails users are bridging this large washout and the new stream bed and getting to/across/ under Route 4. Craig had walked this section with Glenn & Denyce. Glenn said the Town is readying a new project to bring municipal water to the Epsom Traffic Circle area that includes excavating equipment for the water main. He said he could bring this discussion back to the Economic Development Committee to consider for passage underneath Route 4 for all (hikers, walkers, snowmobiles, equestrians).

Discussions included Goboro Road has been repaved and widened, vehicles are now much faster, traveling 45-50 mph. The Police Department has been monitoring speeds, but it is no longer suitable for any type of trails use.

Several trails exist within the New Orchard and Goboro Road corridor that suitable for walking, riding, etc. Historical features include cellar holes, stone walls, and old rangeways in this vicinity, including Class VI roads. Craig asked about potential linkages. It was noted that Odiorne Pond is owned by Audubon and no horses are allowed now. At the end of Highland Drive, the trail will link back down to the Fort Mountain Trailwinders' snowmobile trails. Other trails enter onto New Orchard road and are privately owned, so permission is needed from landowners. **This block of forest land between Goboro Road and New Orchard Road was circled on the Map as a potential area to investigate trail options and a possible trail bypassing traffic on Goboro Rd.**

Craig asked the group where the main trail corridors are in Epsom. Bear Brook State Park was identified, where equestrians prefer 5-mile to 20-mile loops unless there are B&Bs with stabling available. **A block of forest just north of the park could be another location to look for trail opportunities.** This would expand options at Bear Brook State Park and offer more options for loops.

Craig asked about the Suncook Valley Rail Trail section leading up to Pittsfield's Webster Mills Road. Denyce and Glenn agreed said the trail here is beautiful, scenic, and is close enough visit the river. The land is privately owned and permission would be needed, but the trail leads up to the Pittsfield Wastewater Treatment Plant. Barb noted some of the railroad ties are gone or deteriorating. There are historic granite trestles in the woods, with abutments still in place.

Barb mentioned that several years ago, a landowner disallowed use of the informal trail on their property she was regularly riding horses on by blockading the trail and posting a No Horses Allowed sign. The group agreed this situation no longer exists in the area noted. Craig said having an established Town Trails Committee provides a venue for people to bring up and resolve these types of issues. The group agreed.

Craig asked whether the River Road area would be a good SVT connection. Mentions were made of horses getting hoof bruises with the stones on that road. Black Hall Road becomes River Road then turns back into Blackhall Road in Bear Brook Park.

The group noted large powerline corridors run through Epsom that accommodate all types of users. Walkers, bikers, horses, snowmobiles all use the powerline corridors. The question was whether the utility company officially permits this type of activity. **It was agreed further research is needed to determine proper, if any, trails usage along the powerlines.**

A challenge identified is the need for trailhead vehicle parking and trailer parking, with trail access for a range of users.

Craig asked if there were some potential, realistic rail trail projects or connections that could be pursued. This would include grants, Town efforts, landowner agreements, or construction. The group identified:

- 1) Webster Mills railbed trail, which is privately owned.** A suggestion was made for a potential linear trail easement secured on the Webster Mills section properties. Craig noted less permanent landowner agreements can be useful for gaining access to a trail, but would not be preferred if there are to be financial investments, such as trail hardpack, bridges, etc. With investments, it would be prudent to obtain a permanent easement for the trail.
- 2) Connections from the Town Owned Rail Trail to the Epsom Town Forest on Tarlton Road.** Focus on the Town owned land, improve the existing trails, obtain signage, parking at the Epsom Bible Church is available. Identify the potential connection corridors, then obtain support from user groups and land owners to move forward.
- 3) Improve and the existing Town Owned Rail Trail and make a connection to Webster Park to appropriate for walkers and bikers.** Continue to use the Epsom Bible Church as a trailhead and parking area. The section that Town owns could be easiest to pursue.

The group questioned Class VI road potential trail usage and connectivity – Old Swamp Road, Old Mountain Rd into Deerfield, into Bear Brook. Many trails and very little development are located there.

Craig asked whether any connections or possibilities exist for campgrounds to join a SVT network. The two campgrounds, Lazy River Campground and Epsom Valley Campground, are not currently set up for horses, but are large properties and have the room to erect stalls. They would have to be approached to ascertain interest.

Denyce noted the Tiny House cabin rental business next to the Town Forest at Tarlton Road. The cabins are a draw because of the trail system. Glenn noted the nearby microbrewery and agreed the Town Forest area would be a location for potential trails. The group agreed Mountain Road is rough, mountainous, and rideable by horses.

Craig requested that if anyone has GPSed trails in Epsom, he would welcome their inclusion onto the **SVT Working Map**. Moving forward on any project would require the exact location of trails being used, so it would become possible to identify the location of potential connections and the landowners to be contacted. He explained how a GPS trails layers would be helpful to identify where people are using trails. He intends to review

the online Strava fitness heat map that displays where people who have logged in are going, enabling a potential trails layer to add to the maps.

Debbie said Towns could be encouraged to place trails on zoning maps. The purpose would be to identify the landowners and obtain permissions to use trails, as well as try to get trails protected when possible.

A comment was made about it would be nice for trails to cross the state. Craig mentioned the many rail trail initiatives and other initiatives for local and regional trails and trail connections. These initiatives include the Granite State Rail Trail from Salem to Lebanon, the Goffstown/New Boston Rail Trail, the Winnepesaukee and WOW trails, the Rockingham Rec Trail and Freemont Branch Trail, the NH Seacoast Greenway, and others which all connect in New Hampshire.

The group questioned whether it would be possible to establish a trails corridor from Barnstead to Pembroke, following the Suncook Valley Railroad corridor. There is very interesting history here, including the Blueberry Express train that carried blueberries and milk and brought tourists to Wolfeboro, all part of the history of the Suncook Valley.

It was noted that housing was placed on some sections of the former railbed. Backyards were built and the former rail is no longer accessible.

Debbie said when a rail trail project is being considered, to recall that horses cannot walk on a paved railbed, being too slippery, hard on the horses' legs, other users are too fast and spook the horses, etc. She suggested placing an unpaved path next to a paved railbed, situating the two paths next to one another. Barb said as a property owner she would not want pavement. Craig agreed pavement may be more relevant for schools and urban paths, and Glenn said hard pack would be sufficient. There was a general concurrence horses need a loop trail away from Route 4.

Barb noted eagles are nesting along the Suncook River at Goboro Road. Glenn said he would contact Eric Orff for ideas on how to work around the eagles. Stephanie will obtain his email address and include him in the SVT communications.

Craig said the content of the Suncook Valley Trails Plan and the community trails projects is based on the feedback CNHRPC receives, but implementation can only be done by who shows up and who wants to work on projects. Further discussions on specific projects should include trail surfaces and trails uses at different locations.

Stephanie said our next steps will be posting the Epsom Meeting Summary online and holding meetings with the other 4 towns (Allenstown, Chichester, Pembroke, Pittsfield) within next 5 weeks. She invited people to fill out the Trails Experiences Questionnaires to provide more input. Everyone was thanked for attending, and Glenn and Denyce were thanked for hosting the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 7:56.

Meeting Summary by Stephanie Alexander, CNHRPC | 603.226.6020 | salexander@cnhrpc.org

SUNCOOK VALLEY TRAILS MEETING

Town of Pittsfield

Wednesday, April 17, 2019
6:00 PM
Pittsfield Town Hall Meeting Room
85 Main Street

AGENDA

1. Introductions
2. Overview of the Suncook Valley Trails Plan Project
3. Discuss Potential Pittsfield Rail Trail (with Map)
 - a. Review Existing Conditions and Uses of Former Rail Bed
 - b. Identify Opportunities and Challenges
 - c. Develop an Overall Vision for Suncook Valley Railroad Bed
 - d. Identify 1 Achievable Rail Trail Project and/or Strategies for Trails Use (if any)
4. Discuss Other Local Trails and Trail Connections in Pittsfield (with Map)
 - a. Review Existing Trails and Uses
 - b. Discuss Desired Trail Connections (Regional and to Former Railbed)
 - c. Identify Future Achievable Projects (if any)
5. Next Steps

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SUNCOOK VALLEY TRAILS MEETING

Town of Pittsfield

April 17, 2019 | 6:00 PM, Pittsfield Town Hall Large Meeting Room | 85 Main Street

Meeting Summary

In attendance: **Ralph O'Dell**, Pittsfield Master Plan Steering Committee (walk, bike); **Louis Houle**, Pittsfield Community Development Committee (motor bikes, multi); **Paul Ripplinger**, Pittsfield Resident (ATV, snowmobile, walk, bike); **Shea Ripplinger**, Pittsfield Resident (ATV, snowmobile, walk, bike); **Kevin Riele**, Barnstead Resident (ATV); **Mark Brodeur**, Epsom Fort Mountain Trail Winders Club (snowmobile); **Bruce Blye**, Epsom Fort Mountain Trail Winders Club (snowmobile). CNHRPC Staff **Craig Tufts** and **Stephanie Alexander**.

Craig (CNHRPC) led introductions and asked everyone to describe their interest in Pittsfield trails. Ralph and Louis described their work with the Town of Pittsfield, trying to increase recreation and community development opportunities. Paul and Shae wanted both places to ride motorized vehicles as well as having safe walkable and bikable trails for their children. Kevin liked riding ATVs and wanted a nearby trail that was longer than the short rideable sections now available in Pittsfield-Barnstead. Mark and Bruce are working on grants to help maintain and improve the Epsom FMTW Club trails and are looking for multi-jurisdictional opportunities to expand and improve the local trails.

The group wanted a designated set of motorized trails that they could take pride in maintaining. They noted the Town tried 30 years ago to get the former rail trails established again as a trail, but people were not interested at the time.

Craig began with the story of the beginning of the Concord to Lake Sunapee Rail Trail, which started with property owners who slowly began building rail trails years ago. As a result of the hard work and coordination, the rail trail has grown into a potential trail system that stretches from Newbury to Concord. He emphasized trail building begins at the local level.

He said CNHRPC's purpose in developing the Suncook Valley Trails Plan (SVTP) is to encourage local and regional discussions, reviewing maps, and determining opportunities. CNHRPC assists Towns, Economic Development Committees, and others to consider the importance of Town trails, how they bring a community together. The SVT Plan can help the Suncook Valley Towns, Committees, and clubs develop a vision for a potential future for trail system. Craig said their focus is specifically about the former railbed, discussing challenges, opportunities, a couple projects to move forward with, but that connections are important for a local and regional trail system. Conservation lands and Class VI roads are good places to start. Snowmobile trails are developed as a result of years of hard work and the SVTP want to ensure that work and use is respected, so we are inviting everyone to the table to encourage all trails use interests are represented.

The group reviewed the Suncook Valley Trails overview map of the five communities plus surrounding Towns. People noted the popular, newly constructed Hooksett Head's Pond Rail trail. Pembroke is examining a section of the railbed along the Merrimack River to use as a recreational trail. Craig said CNHRPC held an Epsom Trails Meeting on April 2 and said the group in attendance had identified areas from the center of Town to Tarleton Town Forest and a section from Depot Road/Goboro Road to the Pittsfield Town boundary.

Where do you ride and what are your trails experiences? Paul said most of snowmobile trail connect in the vicinity of the Wildwood subdivision in northern Pittsfield between the Schools and the Youth Athletic Park ballfields. Louie described local trails history, where someone hit a tree on snowmachine and sued the landowner as a result. The landowner shut down the property access as a result, and although the property has since changed hands and the laws are better, the story and stigma are often repeated. The property noted is the former railbed located south of the Wastewater Treatment Plant. Craig explained liability laws protect landowners, trails usage is more of a possibility now. Mark said sometimes landowners not too sure about opening their property to the public, so the FMTW provides a brochure published by State to the landowners they talk to. He said the property liability laws now state if a party sues and loses, they become responsible for the other party's attorney fees. Fewer people are worried about being sued and this is a great selling point to landowners.

Some property owners are fine with friends and neighbors using their trails. These locations are a good example of where to hold a conversation to determine ways to circumvent these properties to respect landowner wishes. Trails Committee agreements can be formal or informal. The informal agreements with landowners can get people out using the trails sooner, but when spending more money on the property or building infrastructure such as a bridge, a more formal agreement such as a trails easement should be undertaken. The Concord to Lake Sunapee Rail Trail developed standard trail agreement language that can be shared.

Bruce said the State has funding for legal costs to change the deed that include a trails easement onto the property (not indicated which program). He described when Bow has new landowner on a property where a trail exists, the regulations state the trail must be kept and the new easement is recorded into the deed. We discussed how the Subdivision and Site Plan Regulation can help keep the trail available to people, could lose the forever without protection, and how it could be easy for a Planning Board to adopt these types of regulations than a purchase or Zoning Ordinance change.

We discussed trail protection options such as how developers used the selling point of the Windham rail trail by paving the first section and attracting housing development as a result. Conservation land or easements can be purchased by the Town or donated to the Town.

The group reviewed the Pittsfield SVT Map. From the Epsom town line, they evaluated the rail trail section the Epsom group identified coming into Pittsfield. The former rail trail was noted as usable, including the bridges, from Depot Street in Chichester to Webster Mills Road, except for brush. The rail ties are mostly gone. Craig mentioned a potential Chichester transportation improvement project at the Main Street intersection, which would be a good opportunity to try to get a trails project included.

Louie said the trail narrows by the Pittsfield Wastewater Treatment Plant, but the close fencing could be pulled back; this section is owned by the Town. The Whites Brook Apartments is using footrail, old railbed access to walk or bike into the Town Center. Louie thinks the Town has a right of way for the main sewer line easements along this section. The group agreed this would be a good opportunity to look into.

Louie said trails could provide an economic boost from Epsom to Barnstead. In the Town Center along the industrial properties, Louie indicated the Town received a brownsfield grant. The group discussed how a Town trail can make a case for improving property values, right through the Village where the people are located. A different trail follows along Tilton Hill Road to the ball fields behind the High School. This could be a good area to pursue for a loop, or a straight segment. From the ballfield on Tilton Hill Road, the railbed goes north up to the Barnstead town line. Craig said our region ends at Barnstead town line, which is the end of our SVT Plan study area, so our assistance options are limited beyond the Pittsfield border.

Paul said the snowmobile trail crosses lawns in many places, with a deep gully in the way, so rerouting may be necessary. They noted a property closed off on Will Smith Road because the landowners had some kind problem from the trail use. Kevin said landowner permission is often granted person by person.

Paul compared his ATV experiences in northern New Hampshire where trails are open for users, locations are very convenient to restaurants and inns. He suggested they could be a great possibly to look at in Pittsfield. Craig said every Town has a different policy on ATV use and explained organized ATV clubs have more riding success, as they are often blamed for erosion and trails need regular monitoring. Some Towns prefer non-motorized trails, some prefer motorized. The SVT Plan project is staring this conversation. Different sections of the former rail trail could be allocated for different uses.

The following areas were designated as the best or easiest trails opportunities to pursue in Pittsfield:

- 1) Depot Street to Wastewater Treatment Plant (Chichester Depot Street/Epsom Goboro Road to Pittsfield Webster Mills Road to Wastewater Treatment Plant).** This section begins near a beautiful historic bridge over the Suncook River. Talk to property owners and find routes around closed sections. Bruce stated a parking trailhead is necessary, there is room but a study needs to be conducted to determine the best location and the number of spots needed. Possible areas noted for parking includes Town property near Public Works garage, gravel excavation pits on both sides of the trail. Discussion with landowners to get an easement.
- 2) Center of Town to Tilton Hill Ballfields.** The biggest challenge is getting to Tilton Hill Road behind Elementary School for snowmachines, which cannot trail on sidewalks. Craig noted this Village to Ballfields trail segment was noted in the Safe Routes to School Plan.
- 3) Downtown Pittsfield Loops and Connections.** The rail bed passes right through downtown. Trails may be part of an economic development strategy for the downtown. Craig will provide Ralph and Louie a downtown map for town boards and committees to mark up for trail ideas.

The group reviewed the opportunities outside of the Pittsfield former rail corridor.

Bruce mentioned that a lot of snowmobile trail are located out there in the hilly, hard to access areas. Ralph said the area between Goose Pond to Barnstead contains many BearPaw Regional Greenways and Town conservation easements not shown on the Pittsfield SVT Map, and suggested trying to obtain access for trails in this vicinity. Paul said the snowmobile trail in northern section has scenic vistas and may be able to be opened with existing landowner agreements.

Bruce said snowmobile trails cross Tan Road to Derry Road, noting one to Northwood and the other to Suncook. It is not possible to travel from Pittsfield to Epsom using the old railbed because there are houses on the land now. Snowmobiles do not travel under the bridge. In Epsom, the bridge was washed out during Mother's Day Flood. Craig suggested a case could be made for reestablishing trails infrastructure using long term documentation of trails use and the \$200,000 bridge. Bruce mentioned the new Leighton Brook rehabilitation on the brook does not help the erosion occurring beyond the project location.

Ralph said a possibility is connection from the Town Pool to ballfields, no sidewalks around that, and the Suncook River is also a potential for future recreation and business (canoe rentals). The focus of downtown improvement in Pittsfield includes greenspaces and walking spaces. Craig asked if he could provide Ralph and Louie a zoomed map of Pittsfield Center for them to mark up the existing and possible trails and locations, and they said yes. Ralph wants to see trails connection with conservation parcels, add new trails. He said good trails use sets a positive image for the Town.

Bruce said the Town has a historic walk downtown (Historical Society). Paul the downtown used to be a destination, and the group agreed potential is still there.

Louie said the Community Development Committee (CDC) has a meeting on June 17 for businesses, which CNHRPC will add to its Suncook Valley webpage, to talk about what kind of businesses to attract. Then, the Committee will hold a public meeting to ask what public wants to see Downtown. The Committee applied for and received a US RDA grant to fix up Main Street building facades. They are working with RSA 79-E to improve apartments. Louie said he needs feedback from people, his small group doing a lot of work. The CDC partnered at UNH with Tilton to analyze each other's towns and came up with good, objective ideas. Tilton indicated Pittsfield's sidewalks and roads need improvement. In this year's budget, more sidewalk improvement funding was allocated this year. The Tilton CDC recommended kiosks and trash containers downtown, and the Pittsfield CDC will look for local organization grants for kiosks. The group noted 10% of people do 90% of the work.

Bruce said the Recreational Trails Program (RTP) grants are now so competitive, NH DRED scores collaborative and multi-jurisdiction projects higher. Bruce hoped to work with Town of Epsom for projects. Letters of support should be collected from anyone who will provide them and those applications with more agencies signed on would likely score higher.

Bruce asked whether CNHRPC planned to hold a wrap up meeting after the Plan was completed. Stephanie replied that, since there is interest, we could sponsor a meeting in the middle of June. It was asked when Pembroke and Allenstown are holding their meetings. She said Allenstown opted to incorporate their date into two official Board meetings instead of open discussion meetings. Craig said the ideas in Pembroke are coming through the Master Plan process. The meeting dates will be posted on the project webpage <http://cnhrpc.org/suncook-valley-trails-plan/>.

Stephanie stated our CNHRPC commitment to the Suncook Valley Towns after the SVT Plan has been completed, and encouraged people to stay in touch with us as we can help provide technical assistance or guidance on some of these projects.

The meeting adjourned at 7:50.

Meeting Summary by Stephanie Alexander, CNHRPC | 603.226.6020 | salexander@cnhrpc.org

SUNCOOK VALLEY TRAILS MEETING

Town of Chichester

Wednesday, May 1, 2019
6:00 PM
Chichester Grange/Town Hall, Upstairs Meeting Room
54 Main Street, Chichester

AGENDA

1. Introductions
2. Overview of the Suncook Valley Trails Plan Project
3. Discuss Main Street Area Trails (with Map)
 - a. Review Existing Conditions and Uses of Trails
 - b. Recently Proposed Trail Efforts / Recreational Trails Program (RTP) Grant Application Status
 - c. Develop a Vision for Trails in the Main Street Area
4. Discuss Suncook Valley Rail Trail and Possible Connections into Chichester
5. Discuss Other Local Trails and Trail Connections in Chichester (with Map)
 - a. Review Existing Trails and Uses
 - b. Discuss Desired Trail Connections
 - c. Identify Future Achievable Projects (if any)
6. Next Steps

To stay informed, visit the new **Suncook Valley Trails Plan** website at
<http://cnhrpc.org/suncook-valley-trails-plan/>

Central New Hampshire
Regional Planning
Commission

28 Commercial Street, Suite 3
Concord, NH 03301

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For more information, please contact Craig Tufts ctufts@cnhrpc.org
or Stephanie Alexander salexander@cnhrpc.org
at the CNHRPC or call us at 226-6020

SUNCOOK VALLEY TRAILS MEETING

Town of Chichester

May 1, 2019 | 6:00 PM, Chichester Grange/Town Hall Upstairs Meeting Room | 54 Main Street

Meeting Summary

In attendance: **Robert Mann**, Chichester Conservation Commission (walk/bike), **Tom Jameson**, Chichester Planning Board, Parks and Recreation, **Zach Boyajian**, Chichester Parks and Recreation and Conservation Commission (walk/all season/recreation and conservation), **Kevin Gagne**, Chichester Resident & NH Trail Dawgs Trails Administrator (snowmobile, bike path), **Nicholas (Nick) Wood**, Chichester Resident & Bee Hole Beavers (trails improvement, multi-use, ATV, snowmobile). CNHRPC Staff **Craig Tufts** and **Stephanie Alexander**.

Craig (CNHRPC) led introductions and asked everyone to describe their interest in Chichester trails. He said people see trails as an economic development opportunity. We are asking trails groups what types of trails they would like to see in Town, what are the issues, and have them identify trails locations and potential connections on the map. The former Suncook Valley rail corridors – from Pembroke to Hooksett (Heads Pond) is one rail line, and from Allenstown to Barnstead is the old Blueberry Express rail line – have reverted to private property owners or were used by the State for NH 28. New ideas for other rail projects in the state like the Northern Rail Trail and the Concord to Lake Sunapee Rail Trail undertake efforts to reconnect the former rail trail parcel by parcel, building small pieces of trail. The Concord to Lake Sunapee group started with one man who invited other people to join together a few years ago and the idea took off. If this could occur in the Suncook Valley towns, what type of uses would be preferred and appropriate? CNHRPC is meeting with towns so we can take your ideas and priorities and place them into a consolidated Suncook Valley Trails Plan.

Craig initiated the group **discussion regarding existing and potential trails in Chichester** using the Chichester SVT Map of the study area. He said the Main Street area trails were identified by both the Epsom and Pittsfield group discussions and may be an area of interest to Chichester. He also wanted to talk about rail trail ideas and how the Depot Street area might connect in Town and regionally.

Kevin (Chichester) of the NH Trail Dawgs Snowmobile Club reported the Depot Street / Gaboro Road suspension bridge is part of snowmobile Corridor 360. The Dawgs are trying to reroute trails to cross into the new campground. Two landowners on Main Street ban all trail use except for snowmobiles.

Bob (Chichester) of the Conservation Commission asked about the Bee Hole Beavers (BHB) Snowmobile Club status. Kevin said its directors are not currently active. Kevin performed grant construction work for the club, but is BHB not participating. He is trying to complete their project and obtain permission from landowners because no one from the club is responding, but is still hoping for collaboration before the project's end.

Tom (Chichester) of Parks and Recreation said many Chichester trails are permitted only for snowmobile use and not cross-country skiing by owners, but this rationale doesn't make sense. Kevin said new trails should be for

designed for multi-use and for all season use (hiking and bicycling). As an example of how limited the trail uses are, on Pound Road Zach (Chichester) of Parks and Recreation said one landowner called the police because his wife was jogging on the trail.

Tom showed two maps displaying trails from the Elementary School to Carpenter Park and from Town Hall to the Library; these are projects of the Parks and Recreation Department. The landowner has a well-defined trail on an old powerline through the woods to Corbin Park near the salt shed. He said Doug Hall GPS'd trails included on the Town Carpenter Park Trails Map, which includes the trail around the school.

Nick (Chichester) said the Town-owned Sanborn-Cray Conservation Land trail at Marsh Pond around the bog is dangerous for walkers, snowmobilers and equestrians, and the group agreed. Kevin said rerouting the trail is being considered for the potential RTP grant. The water and bog section is all on Town land, although landowners in the past have denied entry from the parcels surrounding. Kevin displayed a trail around Hess and indicated locations where owners restricted its use. A new, reroute trail cuts down to the Marsh Pond, add new bridge and abutments, continue trail around the Pond, raise the trail up from the bog area. Zach said the Parks and Rec were trying to do this for several years. Kevin said Cons Comm had always dreamed of having a trail around Marsh Pond with RTP funding and this could now be possible. The group was agreeable. Tom noted the beaver dam broke at least twice, so the bridge is vulnerable to being washed out.

Zach said the NH Department of Environmental Services (DES) Dams Bureau sent the landowner and campground a dam maintenance letter with the directive to repair or remove the dam. The landowner applied for a wetlands permit to remove the dam, but the Wetlands Bureau refused to give the Town a permit. As a result, the Town removed as much of the dam as they could, and the landowner did the same on their side. Then, the Dam Bureau sent a letter to both owners stating the dam is now in ruins. Kevin however said the existing beaver dam is immense. Zach said the Town will have to be cautious from regulatory or risk standpoint related to the dam from here on out, including in an RTP grant application.

Tom said Doug Hall (Chichester resident) was struggling to get landowner permission to use their trails and had been working on this since 2015. He asked Craig what could be done; Craig listed options for consideration, including handshake agreements, written agreements that expire, specific forms identifying uses, permanent easements, and more. Zach preferred the agreements where owners could use check boxes as to their exact preferences for trails use on their properties. **Craig said the Concord to Lake Sunapee Rail Trail group has these types of agreements and he will provide some examples to the Parks and Rec Department.**

The Town has had a long goal of linking its public lands and walking paths with snowmobile trails. **Several existing municipal trails were identified in Chichester on Town or school land.**

- 1) Carpenter Park** - The existing 0.5 mile loop stone dust trail around the Carpenter Park perimeter is situated around a playground and community park between Bear Hill Road, Carpenter Road, and NH 28. A public parking area is situated on the park. The trail uses are walking and biking, but a separate snowmobile trail extends from the Park east to cross Bear Hill Road. Crossing Bear Hill Road, hikers can

continue the Carpenter Park Forest Trail as a second 0.5 mile loop, dirt surface trail on the land behind the Highway Department.

- 2) **Marsh Pond Loop Trail** – Group discussed the trail needs improvement, marshy areas with boardwalks sinking. Currently constructed for hikers and walkers, dangerous for snowmobile riders. (Details below)
- 3) **Chichester Elementary School to Town Library** – a short, paved walkway for children and families to be used for walking and bicycling.

Some of these trails are isolated but others hold potential for connection into a wider trail system. They were discussed in the context of connection and enhancement for future projects as indicated below.

The following areas were designated as the best or first priority trails opportunities to pursue in Chichester:

1) Main Street Corridor Community Trail System (approximate area of Horse Corner Road/Center Road, to Bear Hill Road and NH 28, south down Main Street and Cross Road, then connecting from Lane Road back to Horse Corner). This area contains several ideas for future trails consideration, as described above, to connect to or improve existing municipal trails and snowmobile trails. Overall coordinated project: Snowmobile trails cross the private lands and through some town properties within this area, and multiple local Town trails offer hiking located on Town land in isolated loops. There is a potential for a connected, coordinated trail system in this area, summer hiking/bicycling use and snowmobile/cross country skiing winter use. A Trails Committee comprised on the Parks and Rec members, snowmobile club members, and other interested people could work to accomplish this goal. The location of kiosks and parking areas should also be considered while upgrading trails.

1A) Marsh Pond behind the Fire Station. Existing Town hiking and biking trail around Marsh Pond was noted as is swampy and not effective for use. The group indicated a potential partnership between the Parks and Rec Department and the NH Trail Dawgs to potentially raise and improve the trail surface, fix the bridges across the section, and enable snowmobiles for winter use while summer use would be for hikers and bikers. Multiple trail connections could be constructed to reach existing snowmobile trails. Dams are also a problem. The group discussed the opportunities for applying for an RTP grant for some of these trail ideas and talking to the owners of the new Hillcrest Campground to ascertain their interest in a trail connection through their property.

1B) Depot Street connection to Thunder Bridge and Suncook Valley Railbed. Possibility for snowmobile use parallel to Depot Road and may have trail connection potential. Historic Thunder Bridge across the Suncook River near Depot Street/Goboro Road is on the National Register of Historic Places. It may be possible the bridge could be crossed to access the railroad bed in Epsom, connecting to the Epsom town-owned railroad section. Heading north, the railbed heads into Pittsfield. A Chichester Main Street/ NH 28 intersection improvement will be underway in several years, so developing a plan for potential trails usage of this area now is appropriate. It may be possible for some future consideration or work completed under this intersection improvement.

1C) South of Carpenter Park to the Chichester Elementary School is a prime location to construct a trail connection. Kevin said grant in aid could be bolstered by the NH Trail Dawgs Club as a multi-collaborative effort.

Craig said since the Main Street Corridor would be a prime area to establish trails, then discussion should be had about connections to railroad bed. Kevin said snowmobilers and hikers would like official access to the railbed.

It was noted the farmer landowners are fine with winter use but do not want summer use since the fields are being used. Craig said we can map any GPS trails we obtain from the group via to place on the Chichester Suncook Valley Trails Maps and provide them as to help the town with future trails planning. Craig asked Kevin for a GIS shape file layer of the NH Trail Dawgs snowmobile trail.

The group reviewed the sections of the potentially usable former SV railbed beginning in Epsom from the Traffic Circle, but most sections will need to be bypassed to reach the railbed. Incorporating the crossing of Thunder Bridge on Depot Road would add to the experience. The group indicated the area of bypass on the map.

Regarding the Library to School Trail, Zach said Parks and Rec offered to place a parking lot at the end of Class VI Pound Road for trailhead, were refused by the landowners because of alleged garbage dumping and drug usage. Now the Parks and Rec is trying to establish a small parking at the Church next door for just a few cars which may be more feasible.

Bob asked to have Recreational Trails Program grant summarized. Craig said the grant was 20/80 and provided a brief outline. Zach said the perimeter of Carpenter Park off NH 28 had been funded by RTP. Regarding Marsh Pond, the group agreed the boardwalk would be costly. Kevin reported a May 13 workshop for RTP applicants from 1-3 and 6-8 at NH DANCER Bureau of Trails, 172 Pembroke Road in Concord. The group was very interested; Zach said he would attend on behalf of Chichester and Craig plans to attend. Kevin said no equipment category is in the grant for this year.

Stephanie said she would recirculate the RTP meeting info as emailed by Kevin to her to the attending Chichester Trails Meeting attendees. The Town was enthusiastic about attending and applying for at least one RTP grant.

Some land owners only prefer friends and neighbors unless permission is granted or rerouted around. Nick said in the North Country, the technique they use to obtain landowner permission is to find out what the landowner wants. A trade can be arranged (a lawn expansion, for example), and the club or Town can obtain get a trail for life if the right fit is found. This is how the successful trail system in northern NH was built. Regarding overall landowner permissions, Kevin said he can work with landowners and see who might be willing to provide agreement. Nick offered the use of his equipment to help build trails whenever the group wants.

Around the Chichester SVT Map, Craig reviewed the locations of the Epsom and Pittsfield group discussion preferences. Pittsfield has a bike/ped project in the Town Center with some brownfield redevelopment, then snowmobiles into Barnstead. Kevin and Nick said they will talk to the Suncook Valley Sno-Riders Club to see what could work. With the good shape the former railbed is in, it could have potential to be a future

snowmobile corridor trail. Craig described other options in Epsom. For Allenstown, Kevin thought a trail parallel to NH 28 could work. Craig suggested if a northern link could be built and the Pembroke-Allenstown link could be built, then there would have a good case for building a trail north-south from Epsom to Allenstown.

Craig said Allenstown will use the trails discussion as economic development considerations, probably around Bear Brook and Suncook Village. Zach noted that the area of Old Chester Turnpike to the back corner of Bear Brook north of Hooksett, (Manchester Sand and Gravel), people and trails use are not permitted in the area. Nick noted they removed a few railroad crossings to let the water through.

In Epsom, When the railbed reverted to landowners, new homes were built along Goboro Road where the railbed one lay. One of their priorities was to safe way to cross US 4/202 while circumventing the avulsion, and improve the trail with stone dust (Bear Brook is primary Corridor 360 that connects to Corridor 15).

Craig said if the Suncook Valley corridor section can be developed into a continuous rail trail, there would be strong possibilities of future connection down route 28 to connect to the Salem-Concord Bikeway at Allenstown/Pembroke and up to the Northern Rail Trail.

Bob asked what permissions the Town or clubs would need from a landowner if we wanted to pursue the line from line from Epsom to Pittsfield? Craig said the goal of a rail trail is a permanent easement in long term. But there are intermittent steps between a handshake agreement and what snowmobile clubs have been doing, to a signed easement with the Town and the trail placed onto a map for public distribution. Bob asked whether the RPT requires permanent easement? Craig said no, but there is a risk if the landowner sells their property, in which case their agreement would be invalid. Tom added that the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) grants that his department administers require a long-term, permanent easement with a trails designation. Kevin said one option could be to convert Town Class VI road to a Class A trail. Stephanie said Class VI conversion to Class A requires a Town Meeting vote. Tom said that Town are not permitted to spend money on Class VI roads, but a Class A designation would solve this issue. **Craig said we could develop a current Class A/B Municipal Trail factsheet as part of the Suncook Valley Trails Plan project.**

The following areas outside the Suncook Valley Rail Corridor were identified as potential trail connections to pursue in Chichester and beyond:

1) Class VI Pound Road over Center Road toward Town owned land and water body and toward Loudon.

The existing Snowmobile corridor near Bee Hole Beavers (heading toward Loudon) is located in this vicinity. Connecting from the Town Class VI road, agreements could be made with property owners for summer hiking and bicycling use. A Town Trails Committee could approach jointly to request winter snowmobile/cross country skiing use using a simple landowner agreement. Most of the snowmobile trails were noted to have been closed near the town line. The corridor trail needs to be rerouted through Suncook River area to Corridor 15.

2) Spaulding Town Forest narrowly fronts on Hutchinson Road just south of Short Falls Road at the Epsom town line.

A section of trail from Lane Road to Carpenter Park was under development a few years ago. This Town property was identified to have potential for trail connection using nearby Class VI

roads such as Leavitt Road, and the possibility of using snowmobile trails to connect north to the Marsh Pond Trails. The Forest contains interesting destinations, such as caves and a possible observation point with platform. Parking area with kiosks may have to be considered further in because the current neighbor resists parking on their property. This is a good project for a Trails Committee to undertake, as it could connect to the Main Street Community Trail System.

3) North of Bear Hill Road, south of Hilliard Road and west of NH 28. Possible snowmobile connection between the northern end of Carpenter Park and the town own land off south of Hilliard Road.

Tom said the Town had a problem with motorcycles during a charity event driving up Class VI roads, and as a result, landowners have become scared of motorized vehicles. No ATVs/OHRVs are legal on the Town roads because the Selectmen have not permitted their use. A precedent may be Old Davis Road, which had been a Class VI road in the past, and the Town gave the road to the landowner because of multiple concerns.

Bob noted the local confusion over ATVs, although they need specific permission, they are all over the place. They have become a major issue when talking to landowners about use agreements. People are putting up gates. Zach said the Town has a policy that landowner must have provided written permission for OHRVs on their property, which the OHRV operator must carry on them, or else the conservation officer can ticket them. Tom added landowner are mad because ATVs have cut the chains restricting them from the trails on private property. The group discussed the need for a variety of fact sheets to be made available to landowners, including liability. The Bureau of Trails can provide signs to landowners signs for no cost.

Craig related an example from Henniker, where a Town OHRV club was formed and local ATV use was working fine. The problem was that riders from out of town came to Henniker to use the trails and they were not following the established rules, so as a result, the OHRV club gets blamed. Kevin said snowmobile trails are closed by landowners because of ATV use, so the NH Trail Dawgs has placed cameras and signage to help dissuade their use on snowmobile trails. The NH 28 parking area has lots of signs for snowmobiles which have permissions for connecting and crossing over, with no OHRV parking permitted, but that is what the lot is being used for. The Bureau of Trails petitioned NH Department of Transportation to post the trails and conducted a successful social media campaign. Craig mentioned Trails Bureau gave a presentation to the Epsom Conservation on April 12 on local ATV use.

Zach noted wherever there is an open area posted to ATV use, there will be a large draw. He has noted vehicles from other states parked the trail head lots. Tom mentioned Manchester has had problems with ATVs on North High Street, and a tunnel will be constructed under this exit area by Madden Road. Nick said Manchester trails were working just fine with ATVs for 30 years until out-of-staters came in and did not follow rules.

Kevin applauded the equestrian partners for their good work done helping build and maintain trails. The group noted lots of local runners, equestrians and stable owners, not necessarily club-based, in Chichester who might be interested in getting involved.

Bob asked how the Suncook Valley Trails Plan would discuss trails. Craig replied we will present the regional vision and goals, using for Chichester trails the idea of the snowmobile corridor open to year-round use,

property owner agreements, and some of the detailed projects the Town wants to work on. A successful trail have permissions, be recognized, publicized and mapped officially. He suggested the group begin to talk to property owners, identifying what types of trails usage is appropriate and where. Tom said this was Doug Hall's goal to encourage trails for passive informal summer hiking but not a formal surface to draw people from far away. The Parks and Rec Department wants to get local people out into the outdoors. A short trail between Carpenter Park and the Elementary School is appropriate be more formal and paved because of its users.

Craig said Loudon, Bow and other towns have monthly meetings of their Trails Committees to enable collaboration of different groups, to get trails projects done, and to publicize and map the trails. Henniker began a Trails Committee last year; their situation was different as they were starting with existing trails without formal permission and are now seeking permission for mapping & publicizing. The group agreed the Carpenter Park Trail is newly built and very popular, was a success endeavor.

Zach said the property owner near Marsh Pond currently denies permission for maintaining the existing trail during the summer. Bob said sometimes landowners have heard horror stories and many people must feel the same in the region. He hopes the SVT Plan will address how people can feel comfortable for signing an agreement for trails use on their property, perhaps adding guidelines and resources.

Craig offered to revisit the Town to determine a detailed plan on some of these potential projects. He would plan to bring brochures on liability, fact sheets on trails, and copies of the State statutes governing trails. Nick noted when landowners sign agreement through an official snowmobile club, the landowners pays no court fees in the event of being sued for liability- the entire case goes to the State instead. The State has insurance for the clubs, for which they pay. Tom said laws exist to protect the landowner, and people whose lands are in current use under the recreation benefit automatically permit people to use their land. He asked if CNHRPC could map the designated current use recreation parcels to help with the Town's trails planning and inquired where that data might exist. Stephanie suggested reviewing the NH Department of Revenue Administration for up to date information on current use laws, then suggested reviewing the Town's MS-1 or MS-7 forms. The assessing data might contain the recreation designation. The group will investigate the current use recreation data and will provide it to Craig to add the properties to the Chichester SVT Map.

Stephanie explained the wrap up of the Suncook Valley Trails Plan project. CNHRPC will submit the draft document within the next couple of weeks to the NH Department of Transportation. We will be scheduling a final meeting to review the draft Plan with the five communities; this will be another opportunity for changes before the Plan is finalized. Tom asked about future trails meetings in Chichester. Craig suggested the Parks and Rec Department can organize a meeting and CNHRPC can attend and help advise and prepare maps, etc.

The meeting adjourned at 7:40.

Meeting Summary by Stephanie Alexander, CNHRPC | 603.226.6020 | salexander@cnhrpc.org

Follow up item 05-03- Kevin Gagne sent through Stephanie an email with the RTP 2020 application information, which she emailed to the Chichester meeting attendees. He also reported he viewed the historic Thunder Bridge on Depot Street and spoke with Bruce Blye of the Epsom Fort Mountain Trailwinders Snowmobile Club. Bruce is familiar with the old rail bed and

the owners. There used to be a snowmobile trail which utilized the old rail bed, but the property owners currently deny access. Kevin suggested sending letters to those affected requesting reopening to foot and bike traffic.



Town of Allenstown
16 School Street
Allenstown, NH 03275
603-485-4276

Economic Development Committee
Meeting Agenda

Wednesday, 6:30 p.m., May 8, 2019
Allenstown Town Hall, 16 School Street, Allenstown, NH

Regular Business. Agenda items must be submitted to the Chairman by Weds. Noon before the meeting.

Pledge

Roll Call

Old Business

- **Town signs:** Deposits have been sent to the sign vendor and the woodcarver. DOT Traffic Bureau has been contacted. Do we want floral plantings around each sign?
- **Plans for Grand Opening Ceremonies:** Updates on business openings.
- **Summer Concert at Town Hall:** Discuss where and when we can preview Mike McGee's band associates at a local gig. Still need to determine food vendors and other possible activities.
- **Pole Banners:** Need reports on (1) the number and location of utility poles to decorate and (2) prices from the vendors we identified.

New Business

- **Suncook Valley Trails Plan:** Central NH Planning Commission is to discuss the Allenstown section of this proposed trail. See their agenda.

Review Previous Meeting Minutes

Review and approve minutes if available.

Schedule the next meeting

May 22, 2019

Notices Regarding the Conduct of the Meeting.

- Meetings are electronically recorded for the purpose of preparing written minutes. A record of the meeting is available for public inspection not later than five (5) business days after the meeting, as required by RSA 91-A:2, II.
- If you require accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (as amended), please contact the Town Administrator by telephone (603-485-4276 ext. 112) or send e-mail to ta@allenstownnh.gov.
- The EDC reserves the right to hold any non-public session during the Regular Meeting, whether noted on the Agenda or not. Notice of a non-public session on an agenda is for planning purposes only. The citations to the Right-to-Know Law, set out at NH RSA 91-A, are provisional and may be revised as circumstances require.
- Any time noted on an agenda is approximate only. New business is not considered after 9:00 p.m.

SUNCOOK VALLEY TRAILS MEETING

Town of Allenstown

Wednesday, May 8, 2019

6:30 PM

Allenstown Economic Development Committee
16 School Street, Allenstown

AGENDA

1. Introductions and Overview of the Suncook Valley Trails Plan Project (:10)
2. Discuss Potential Allenstown Rail Trail Locations (with Map) (:25)
 - a. Review Existing Conditions and Uses of Former Rail Beds
 - b. Overview of Rail Trail Discussions to Date - Identify Opportunities and Challenges
 - c. Develop an Overall Vision for Suncook Valley Railroad Beds
3. Discuss Other Local Trails and Trail Connections in Allenstown (with Map) (:15)
 - a. Review Other Suncook Valley Town Ideas
 - b. Review Existing Trails and Uses
 - c. Discuss Desired Trail Connections – Bear Brook, Suncook Village
 - d. Identify Future Achievable Projects (if any)
4. Next Steps (:05)

To stay informed, visit the new **Suncook Valley Trails Plan** website at
<http://cnhrpc.org/suncook-valley-trails-plan/>

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For more information, please contact Craig Tufts ctufts@cnhrpc.org
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at the CNHRPC or call us at 226-6020

SUNCOOK VALLEY TRAILS MEETING

Town of Allenstown

May 8, 2019 | 6:30 PM, Economic Development Committee | 16 School Street

Meeting Summary

In attendance: **Scott McDonald**, Allenstown EDC (All), **Michael Frascinella**, Allenstown EDC (Hiking), **Jeffrey Venegas**, Allenstown EDC (all), **Derek Goodine**, Town Administrator, **Debbie Briscoe**, NH Horse Council (horse, hike, ski), **Armand Verville**, Allenstown Historical Society, **Kris Raymond**, Resident (all), **Brian Goss** (all), and **Craig Tufts**, CNHRPC staff.

Craig (CNHRPC) thanked the Economic Development Committee (EDC) for hosting this forum. He asked if the EDC had had discussions in the past about trails as part of an economic development strategy. They replied that they had not. Craig noted that many communities are seeing trails as part of an overall economic development strategy to enhance local quality of life, recreation options, and to bring visitors to town.

The rest of the guests introduced themselves and their trail interests.

Craig explained that the premise behind the Suncook Valley Trails Plan. He mentioned that other parts of the state have taken abandoned railroad beds and have turned them into popular rail trails. There have been recent successes west of Concord that have similarities to the existing railroad bed that runs from Suncook Village to Pittsfield (Blueberry Express). When this railroad bed was abandoned the property reverted back to the underlying property owners, so in order to open a public trail on corridor the broken up pieces would need to be stitched back together in some way. Craig noted that in places like Warner and Hopkinton several community members took the initiative to re-establish the rail bed for a trail and have had some success. This Suncook Valley Trails Plan hops to investigate the opportunity of doing something similar here, and to gauge the community for interest.

Craig also explained that in addition to the Suncook Valley rail line or “Blueberry Express” from Suncook to Pittsfield, there is perhaps an even better rail trail option paralleling the Merrimack River from Concord to Hooksett that passes just downhill from Suncook Village in Allenstown. Here too the corridor is a mix of private and public ownership that would need to be stitched back together. Craig noted that Hooksett had upgraded a portion of this rail bed down by the dog park and courthouse and is interested in extending it further, up to the Allenstown town line. He noted that Pembroke has been actively looking at the rail bed through their Master Plan update and had begun informal conversations with property owners. Residential developers in the area were supportive of the trail and appeared willing accommodate the trail as part of their projects.

Craig noted that because much of the rail bed is on private property, that any advancing of the rail trail idea would need approval of property owners. He noted that this plan does not intend to dictate what private property owners should do with their land. If the community desires a trail, a local group would need to

approach the landowner with a specific ask. If the landowner answers with a “no thank you” that decision must be respected. Often times property owners are willing to work with people advancing trails. In other communities, property owners have donated easements. Some property owners see the trail as adding value to their property.

After a group discussion on existing conditions, trail ideas, and possible routes, the group came to identify 4 areas of interest for trail development. Numbers 1 and 2 were agreed to be a much higher priority than 3 and 4.

- 1) Develop a Rail Trail from Hooksett to the China Mill** – The group identified this trail as the primary opportunity for the town. It was noted that there appears to be only one private property owner along this route. It appears to be a strategic decision to tie into the work already being done in Hooksett and perhaps partner with them on various aspects of trail building.
- 2) Bridge to Pembroke** – A rail-trail bridge connection would connect the Hooksett to Allenstown rail trail from the vicinity of China Mill over the canal and Suncook River to Pembroke. It was noted that this would require coordination between Allenstown and Pembroke. It was noted that the old railroad bridge piers are intact and a structure exists there now that carries utility pipes across. It was noted that the Sewer Commission/Department may be involved. Until a bridge can be built, an on-street connector should be identified.
- 3) Epsom to Bear Deerfield Rd/Bear Brook State Park** – The group felt that the railroad bed from Epsom could be used as a trail down to Deerfield road, but a washed out bridge and private property would be a consideration. An alternative route would be to use Black Hall Rd as the trail route. Black Hall Rd is a State Park road that is unmaintained for vehicle travel. It was noted that this is less of a priority than the Suncook Village area trail and would probably hold off until trail at the Epsom side of the town line is ready to advance.
- 4) Bear Brook State Park to Suncook Village** – The group felt that although it would be desirable to have an off street trail connecting Bear Brook State Park to Suncook Village, that such a large project appeared unrealistic at this time. Marking an on-street route using River Road and a short portion of Route 28 seemed the reasonable way to enhance a connection. River Road is pleasant for walking and bicycling under existing conditions.

Discussion ensued about the possible economic benefits of trails, particularly a conceptual trail from Hooksett to Pembroke. Members of the EDC and guests discussed trails in other places they had visited and noted how they appear to enhance the local economy. Derek noted some of his experience with trails while working in Maine.

Craig noted that the potential trail from Hooksett to Pembroke is a preferred route for the proposed Granite State Rail Trail, which would go from Salem at the Massachusetts border to Lebanon at the Vermont border, about 115 miles. Along the GSRT route, the 54 mile Northern Rail Trail from Lebanon to Boscawen is completed. Most of the Salem to Manchester rail trail is completed (Salem Bike-Ped corridor, Windham Rail Trail, Derry Rail Trail, Londonderry Rail Trail, South Manchester Trail). The Allenstown trail would help fill a gap in the Granite

State Rail Trail between Manchester to Concord. The group discussed how being along a long-distance trail could be economically advantageous to Allenstown.

Also discussed was a need to coordinate with neighboring towns of Pembroke and Hooksett. The Sewer Commission/Department may also be a partner, as they own rights of way and use the bridge structure for utility pipes.

The group discussed what trail uses would be appropriate. All agreed the bicycling and walking would be a primary target. Meeting attendees appeared open to the idea of snowmobile use. There was uncertainty about permitting ATV along the corridor. It was noted that future meetings and discussions would need to work out appropriate trail uses, and that property owners would have the primary say in the matter.

The meeting concluded with some attendees interested in pursuing the rail trail concept further and wished to be included in any further discussions.

The meeting adjourned at 7:45.

Meeting Summary by Craig Tufts, CNHRPC | 603.226.6020 | ctufts@cnhrpc.org



Town of Allenstown
Town Administrator
16 School Street
Allenstown, NH 03275
603-485-4276 ext. 112
TA@allenstownnh.gov

ALLENSTOWN SELECT BOARD
MEETING¹ AGENDA
TOWN HALL, 16 SCHOOL ST.
Monday, 6:00² o'clock p.m., May 20, 2019

CITIZENS' COMMENTS. This agenda item is for the people of Allenstown to comment about matters of public interest. For matters that require action by the Board, please contact the Town Administrator at (603) 485-4276 ext. 112 for additional time or an appointment at a future meeting.

REGULAR BUSINESS. Agenda items must be submitted to the Town Administrator by Noon on the Wednesday before the Board's Regular Meeting.

Regular Agenda

- Suncook Valley Trails
- Main Street Academy Summary
- Zone Change and 79E Tax Program and China Mill Update
- Public Works Staffing – Possible Temp Worker
- Paving Bid Award
- Hazardous Mitigation Plan Grant
- June 3 Selectboard Meeting will be at the Old Allenstown Meeting House on Deerfield Rd

Non-Public Agenda Items

- Non-Public Session in accordance with the provisions of RSA 91-A:3,II (c)
- Non-Public Session in accordance with the provisions of RSA 91-A:3,II (c)

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

CONSENT CALENDAR, MINUTES AND MANIFESTS

- **Ratify Consent Calendar:** May 20, 2019
- **Review Minutes:**
 - **Non-Public:** May 6, 2019 Session I and II
 - **Public:** May 6, 2019 and April 29, 2019
- **Approve Payroll and Accounts Payable Manifests:**
 - ACH Manifest 1059; Check Manifest 1057 and 1060; Non-Check Manifest 1048, 1049, 1050, and 1058
 - Town P/R Manifests – 05-09-19

¹ The Select Board reserves the right to hold any non-public session during the Regular Meeting, whether noted on the Agenda or not. Notice of a non-public session on an agenda is for planning purposes only. The citations to the Right-to-Know Law, set out at NH RSA 91-A, are provisional and may be revised as circumstances require.

² Any time noted on an agenda is approximate only, and may not reasonably create an expectation that an item will be reached at that time. Items are normally taken up in the order in which they appear unless modified by the Select Board. New business is not considered after 9:00 p.m.

NOTICES REGARDING THE CONDUCT OF THE MEETING.

- Meetings may be electronically recorded in any manner for the purpose of preparing written minutes. A record of the meeting is available for public inspection not later than five (5) business days after the meeting, as required by RSA 91-A:2, II. Minutes are ordinarily approved at the next Regular Meeting of the Board.
- If you require accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (as amended), please contact the Town Administrator by telephone (603-485-4276 ext. 112) or email (ta@allentownnh.gov).
- ¹ The Select Board reserves the right to hold any non-public session during the Regular Meeting, whether noted on the Agenda or not. Notice of a non-public session on an agenda is for planning purposes only. The citations to the Right-to-Know Law, set out at NH RSA 91-A, are provisional and may be revised as circumstances require.
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SUNCOOK VALLEY TRAILS MEETING

Town of Allenstown

Monday, May 20, 2019
6:00 PM
Allenstown Board of Selectmen
16 School Street, Allenstown

AGENDA

1. Overview of the Suncook Valley Trails Plan Project
2. Progress after Meetings with Communities
3. Review Allenstown Trails Priorities
4. Next Steps for the Project – Draft Plan to be Presented in June

To stay informed, visit the new **Suncook Valley Trails Plan** website at
<http://cnhrpc.org/suncook-valley-trails-plan/>

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SUNCOOK VALLEY TRAILS MEETING

Town of Allenstown

May 20, 2019 | 6:00 PM, Board of Selectmen | 16 School Street

Meeting Summary

In attendance: **Therese Smith**, NH House Council (Horses), **Michael Frascinella**, Allenstown EDC (Walk/Bike), **Michael Stark**, Police Department, **Derek Goodine**, Town Administrator, **Debbie Bender**, Allenstown Finance Department, **Carol Anderson**, Town of Allenstown (offered grant help), **Kathleen Pelissier**, Town Clerk (Walking), **Marc Boisvert**, Highway Department, **Sandra McKenney**, Selectmen, **Maureen Higham**, Selectwoman, and **Craig Tufts**, CNHRPC staff.

Craig (CNHRPC) thanked the Board of Selectmen for allowing him to present on the Suncook Valley Trails Plan. He discussed how he held a visioning and public input session with the Economic Development Committee (EDC) a few weeks ago and got a lot of feedback from participants. In addition, Craig has been involved in some informal discussions about a rail trail concept with various members of the community over the past several years. Craig said he'll summarize the findings from these sources of public input and share them with the selectboard.

Craig explained that the premise behind the Suncook Valley Trails Plan. He noted that there is an abandoned railroad bed in Allenstown from Hooksett to Pembroke that could be converted to a rail bed. In addition, there is the old "Blueberry Express" railroad bed that runs from Pittsfield to Suncook Village in Allenstown. When these railroad beds were abandoned the property reverted back to the underlying property owners, so in order to open a public trail on corridor the broken up pieces would need to be stitched back together in some way. Craig noted that in other parts of NH community members took the initiative to re-establish abandoned railroad beds as trails and have had some success. This Suncook Valley Trails Plan hopes to investigate the opportunity of doing something similar here, and to gauge the community for interest. Thus far that interest has been positive.

In addition, the plan hopes to identify any other trail opportunities other than the rail trail, and perhaps investigate opportunities to take advantage of the existing trail network in Bear Brook State Park for the advancement of Allenstown's interests.

Craig summarized the findings from the meeting with the EDC a few weeks ago. The group identified four priority areas Allenstown could focus on.

- 1) Develop a Rail Trail from Hooksett to the China Mill** – The group identified this trail as the primary opportunity for the town. It was noted that there appears to be only one private property owner along this route. It appears to be a strategic decision to tie into the work already being done in Hooksett and perhaps partner with them on various aspects of trail building.

- 2) Bridge to Pembroke** – A rail-trail bridge connection would connect the Hooksett to Allenstown rail trail from the vicinity of China Mill over the canal and Suncook River to Pembroke. It was noted that this would require coordination between Allenstown and Pembroke. It was noted that the old railroad bridge piers are intact and a structure exists there now that carries utility pipes across. Until a bridge can be built, an on-street connector should be identified.
- 3) Epsom to Bear Deerfield Rd/Bear Brook State Park** – The group felt that the railroad bed from Epsom could be used as a trail down to Deerfield road, but a washed out bridge and private property would be a consideration. An alternative route would be to use Black Hall Rd as the trail route. Black Hall Rd is a State Park road that is unmaintained for vehicle travel. It was noted that this is less of a priority than the Suncook Village area trail and would probably hold off until trail at the Epsom side of the town line is ready to advance.
- 4) Bear Brook State Park to Suncook Village** – The group felt that although it would be desirable to have an off street trail connecting Bear Brook State Park to Suncook Village, that such a large project appeared unrealistic at this time. Marking an on-street route using River Road and a short portion of Route 28 seemed the reasonable way to enhance a connection. River Road is pleasant for walking and bicycling under existing conditions.

It was noted that the rail trail through Allenstown connecting Hooksett to Pembroke was deemed the highest priority because of its feasibility and potential economic impacts to Allenstown and Suncook Village.

There was a question from the audience on whether we are looking at grants to build the trail. Craig responded that the project is not ready yet for applying for grants, but that this plan hopes to help set the stage for the community to do so. Craig said he can assist the town or a community group in applying for grants, which may include the Federal Recreational Trails Program grants administered by the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources. The participant offered her assistance in applying for such grants when the time comes.

It was also noted that the primary anticipated use of these trails based on feedback so far was for bicycling and walking. Equestrians have also expressed a desire to use trails and the community has so far been favorable. Snowmobile use may also be appropriate in some or all areas of the trail, but further discussions would need to be had with property owners, abutters, and the community at large. In the feedback he has received so far, there appeared to be less support for All Terrain Vehicle (ATV) use on these trails in Allenstown, with most people preferring non-motorized summer use. Craig noted that ATV use and impacts can become controversial, so if ATVs are desired by the community it may be best to have a community discussion in advance.

The selectboard thanked Craig for the work.

The Selectboard moved on to other items at approximately 6:30.

Meeting Summary by Craig Tufts, CNHRPC | 603.226.6020 | ctufts@cnhrpc.org

SUNCOOK VALLEY TRAILS MEETING

Town of Pembroke

Tuesday, May 28, 2019
5:30 PM
Pembroke Town Hall, Downstairs Meeting Room
311 Pembroke Street, Pembroke

AGENDA

1. Introductions
2. Overview of the Suncook Valley Trails Plan Project
3. Discuss Potential Pembroke Rail Trail (with Map)
 - a. Review Existing Conditions and Uses of Former Rail Bed
 - b. Identify Opportunities and Challenges
 - c. Develop an Overall Vision for Suncook Valley Railroad Bed
 - d. Identify 1 Achievable Rail Trail Project and/or Strategies for Trails Use (if any)
4. Discuss Other Local Trails and Trail Connections in Pembroke (with Map)
 - a. Review Existing Trails and Uses
 - b. Discuss Desired Trail Connections (Regional and to Former Railbed)
 - c. Identify Future Achievable Projects (if any)
5. Next Steps

To stay informed, visit the **Suncook Valley Trails Plan** webpage at
<http://cnhrpc.org/suncook-valley-trails-plan/>

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SUNCOOK VALLEY TRAILS MEETING

Town of Pembroke

May 28, 2019 | 5:30 PM, Pembroke Town Hall | 311 Pembroke Street

Meeting Summary

In attendance: **Ayn Whytemare**, Pembroke Conservation Commission (walk/bike), **Carolyn Cronin**, Pembroke Town Planner, **Carol Bertsimas**, Pembroke Conservation Commission (all non-motorized), **Ammy Heiser**, Pembroke Conservation Commission (non-motorized), **Kevin Gagne**, Chichester NH Trail Dawgs Snowmobile Club (all). CNHRPC Staff **Craig Tufts and Stephanie Alexander**.

All attendees knew one another. Craig (CNHRPC) said this Suncook Valley Trails project began after another regional rail trail organization, Concord to Lake Sunapee Rail Trail (CLSRT), began successfully reconnecting old railbeds into trails from Concord to Newbury. So far in this Suncook Trails project, priority trails use emphasis is biking and walking, but Craig said trail uses also depend on what the Town wants. Several snowmobile clubs and equestrian groups have been participating in other towns for this project. As a result, the different user groups have the potential to pool their resources and knowledge and work together to complete a project. Trails create opportunity for economic development and tie into the culture of a community, which was agreed to apply to Pembroke as well.

Ayn (Conservation Commission) said connectivity to the Range Roads would be of major importance for a local trail system. Craig described how Chichester wanted to connect the Elementary School and Carpenter Park in addition to review options along Depot Road and the old railbed. Craig said the draft Suncook Valley Trails Plan will summarize what each Town wants to do with respect to rail trails and connectivity and the Plan will present an overall vision for the entire Suncook Valley region.

Ammy (Conservation Commission) asked how Pembroke can we contribute to further the potential rail trail along the Merrimack River, tentatively named the proposed Pembroke Rail Trail. She asked what has worked in other communities? Craig said having Carolyn (Town Planner) as a resource is critical, and a go-getter is needed to excite people. Because of the CLSRT success in Warner, the Suncook Valley area should be able to copy what has worked. He said the CLSRT had a pro bono attorney develop language for a permanent easement. **Craig said he will check into whether the document is sharable and will get back to the Conservation Commission.**

Ayn said recently, an oral history event on the Blueberry Express was held. People spoke about what it was like to grow up in the 1940s and 1950s. In school when the kids saw the train going by and the small fires started, the bell was rung, which signaled the kids needed to go outside to stomp out the little fires started by the train. She suggested a possible rail trail supporter with knowledge on the history of the railroads could be Armand Verville of Allenstown, whose home is one of the old depots. Craig said we met Mr. Verville when he attended the May 8 Allenstown Trails Meeting.

Ayn acknowledged ATV use in Pembroke is difficult in Town, no one wants them on trails unless they own one.

The group had a brief discussion about potential trail easements along the potential Pembroke Trail. Ayn requested an example of a trail easement that she might be able to present to her family members and neighbors as well as a map. **At Ayn's request, Stephanie will email to Ayn the PDF map of properties along the Merrimack River the group was referencing for discussion.**

Craig suggested a permanent trail easement for each property comprising the Pembroke Rail Trail would provide the necessary trail protections in perpetuity for the continued use of the trail. The group said PSNH/Eversource indicated a few years ago they were not opposed, and that they would need access to the lines, and did not want to be held responsible if there was damage to the trail while doing maintenance. The group agreed more talking needs to be done related to Eversource.

To get started on the Pembroke Rail Trail, the group discussed building positive relationships with property owners. It was noted two bridges are missing on either end, crossing the Soucook River and the Suncook River. The question of where the trail should run was discussed. Options included around Memorial Field or through Suncook Village. The group thought the Meet Me in Suncook non-profit would be very interested and supportive since several attendees have spoken individually with their Board members. The initial thought was having the Pembroke rail Trail head through Suncook Village. Stephanie (CNHRPC) said once the Suncook Valley Trail Plan is completed, CNHRPC are still available for technical assistance and to serve as cheerleaders.

Ammy suggested a connection to the Granite State Rail Trail would be a great alternative way to commute from Manchester to Concord, and people are always looking for a better route. Craig recommended finding commuter groups to help promote the trail. He said promotion and networking is a big part of what a local Trails Committee would have to do. The Granite State Rail Trail has several other non-profits promoting the trail and is also trying to market tourism as a benefit of the rail trail. The CLSRT in the Central NH region is successful by having both a non-profit arm (which can own easements, conduct fundraising, advocacy etc). and a municipal arm (to apply for grants, to provide the use of town equipment for labor, etc) and is a good model to follow. After Ayn mentioned ice cream stands along trails, Craig mentioned that the unofficial motto of the CLSRT is "ice cream every 45 minutes" as a way to promote tourism within each of their rail trail towns. He said that all of us should be thinking strategically about who would hold the easements, the Town, Conservation Commission, or non-profit trails group? Before the group talks with property owners, the Town would want to have this answer ready. It would also need an answer to the question of the easement being in the same location of Eversource utility easements.

The following areas were designated as the best or easiest trails opportunities to pursue in Pembroke:

- 1) Railroad bed parcels along the Merrimack River from White Sands to Memorial Field and the Suncook River, as the "Pembroke Rail Trail."** The group reviewed the potential likelihood and difficulties parcel by parcel, noting that it appeared possible to get support from each property owner. The group noted the value in having an easily accessible trail connecting White Sands, the Bow Ln neighborhood, and Suncook Village and Memorial Field.

- 2) **Railroad bed parcels along the Merrimack River heading north from White Sands to the Plausawa Development and beyond.** This section of the old railbed is currently walkable, but permission would be needed for public access. To extend the Pembroke Rail Trail north toward Concord and the Granite State Rail Trail, the trail needs to cross several parcels that are privately owned or owned by Eversource and would need to bridge the Soucook River to Concord.
- 3) **Build hiking trails on an upcoming conservation parcel off Third Range Road behind Center Road.** This property is in close proximity and walking distance to a lot of residents and would probably prove popular. Trails could connect into Third Range Road. A boardwalk or some type of trail work could help continue recreation access along Third Range Road north of Brickett Hill Road.

The group reviewed the potential likelihood and difficulties of the rail trail parcel by parcel. The group should talk to Eversource to determine how a trail easement could fit on top of their utility easement. Carolyn said they would want to have vehicular access, probably a gate with a key that Eversource (formerly PSNH) has access to similar to the gate at White Sands. Kevin (NH Trail Dawgs) suggested permission is necessary from both Eversource and the landowners both involved. **Carolyn will work to set up a meeting with Eversource, asking Bob Bourque on the Planning Board, who had worked for PSNH, who might be the best person/Department to talk to.** Craig said the discussion should include finding out what features and/or deed language are necessary and what the needs are for the utility company to maintain their lines.

Discussion was held as to what types of trail uses are desired in Town and along the rail trail. Universally, attendees preferred bicycle and pedestrian trails (non-motorized). They agreed equestrian usage is appropriate, and other winter uses such as cross-country skiing and snowshoeing are also desirable. The group thought snowmobiles may be an appropriate use for the trail if they can be a strategic partner in getting the trail built. The group noted that any negative impacts of snowmobile use are far less than ATVs. The group stressed just one motorbike or ATV can wreck a trail, such as making ruts, exposing roots and rocks, enabling standing mud pools, and eroding the trail base, while deterring bicycle/pedestrian users from using the trails. Ammy said on the Range Roads, one seldom sees a bicycle because the Class VI roads are now impassible, and the ruts would bury a bike. ATVs are making ruts and exposing roots and rocks, and the group expressed dismay that most Town trails and Class VI roads are impassible because of improper ATV usage. Horses are often spooked by ATVs. Massive mudholes 1-2 feet deep do not completely freeze in the winter and are dangerous for skiers and snowshoers.

The group had less of a conflict with snowmobiling. Although the snowmobile clubs will make repairs to trails, ATV enthusiasts sometimes go out shortly after the repairs are completed, and then again damage the Range Roads for winter use. A discussion began about placement of gates and bars on the Class VI roads. Stephanie asked who would pay for the gates, and Ammy and Carolyn suggested donations from local organizations.

The following areas outside the Suncook Valley Rail Corridor were identified as potential trail connections to pursue in Pembroke:

- 1) **Construct trails in the Center Road property easement soon to be received by the Conservation Commission is in proximity to Pembroke Hill Elementary School, private schools and housing developments.** This property is within walking distance of a lot of residents and students and would probably prove popular. Trails could connect into Third Range Road. A boardwalk or some type of trail work could help continue recreation access along Third Range Road north of Brickett Hill Road.
- 2) **Convert some Class VI Town non-maintained Range Roads to Class A trails.** The group agreed that the Class VI Range Roads in Town are a historic and recreational treasure, but that they are in terrible condition due to ATV/OHRV/motorized overuse or improper use. An effort to restore these trails to a condition that is safe and usable to a wider range of users is highly desirable. Conversion of Class VI roads to Class A trail status may be a tool to help achieve this.

Carol said there are informal trails through the Center Road such as logging roads. Discussion was held about potential connections to Third Range Road through the boggy wetland which used to be accessible. The Conservation Commission would have to find a way to replace the former raised area to enable a permanent crossing for different trail users.

From Church Road, a trail user can walk or bike on trails and Class VI roads all the way to Seventh Range Road. Craig suggested GPSing the trail(s), obtaining trails use agreement with landowners, and posting the maps on Town websites. The group reiterated the substantial ATV activity on the Range Roads. Enforcement and usage signage is often removed within a day of placement. The Range Roads are posted as closed for half of the year (open May 31-Oct 31), but there is little law enforcement on the Range Roads. The Police Department is aware of the situation and say they regularly chase ATVs, sometimes giving tickets to offenders, but are very limited in their enforcement capability. It was noted that plated vehicles are permitted to use the Range Roads, but most cannot use them because of the surface condition. Craig noted Pembroke seemed to have difficult ATV problems that may require additional steps to help solve.

Kevin suggested the Town look into converting some of the Range Roads to Class A trails. This would require the vote of the townspeople to enable passage at Town Meeting. He said Chichester is looking to designate some Class VI roads as Class A trails, and this has occurred successfully in Northfield. He said the NH Trail Dawgs is working with the towns on this project. Stephanie read the first half of RSA 231:A-1 Municipal Trails. Among other things, Class A trails limit the types of vehicles that travel on the roads while preserving existing landowner access rights. She felt it was likely that most community members would likely support such a change in order to better manage the Range Roads. Kevin said a good example is along NH 28 in Pembroke where ATV parking was used as a trail head. NHDOT allowed for snowmobile crossing and no OHRVs, and they and NH Department of Natural and Cultural Resources posted the area. As a result, the location is no longer being used as ATV access to trails and the concept has worked successfully. **The group supported the idea of Class A trail designation and decided to research further.**

It was noted when the gates were placed at White Sands beach by PSNH, out of state day trippers no longer made the trek because the gates necessitated walking to the riverside beach. The out-of-town usage dropped off tremendously when the gates were placed.

Craig asked if anybody in Town was ready to start a non-profit group for the Pembroke Rail Trail. Ayn suggested perhaps the Conservation Commission could hold the easements instead of establishing another non-profit organization. Ammy said they would need to consider for how long a new non-profit could be viable and whether the Conservation Commission would remain active over time, as there have been periods of dormancy in the past. Ayn said she would feel more comfortable and it would be easier using the Conservation Commission than having another non-profit in Town that does not run well. The Conservation Commission members felt they could monitor easements and expressed confidence they could do this project for the long run.

Craig asked, what happens when people donate money? Ammy said donations have been placed in their Conservation Fund previously. When a property is donated for fee simple, is a good tax advantage not to have restrictive language. The group suggested contacting Tom Masland at 5 Rivers Trust, who provided the Center Hill parcel information so they could hold the easement. An appraiser had to assign a value for the parcel, and this step costs money. Ayn said her most people who are donating an easement would not want to pay their own money to get an appraisal. Craig said at CLSRPC, appraisals are typically not done. He asked if there is an existing non-profit organization the Conservation Commission could partner with to establish a bank account? **Ammy will look into the Conservation Commission having a partnership with a non-profit to determine if the idea is plausible.** The group said the Meet Me In Suncook non-profit is able to raise the money and obtain donations to receive funding. The Kiwanis sponsored the Head's Pond Trail in Hooksett. There is a possibility Associated Grocers of New England, situated nearby the proposed Pembroke Rail Trail, could be approached as a donor. Kevin said NH Trail Dawgs is a 501-C3 organization with bank accounts and said the club has wanted to work on a rail trail for a long time. **He will speak with the Directors to obtain their input on the idea.** Craig said an issue for snowmobile clubs to consider might be that the owner might want to give a permanent easement only for walking/biking but not snowmobile use.

Craig discussed a town decision on whether the rail trail should be paved or stone dust. Having an answer may help with discussions with Eversource. The Master Plan Transportation Subcommittee preferred a paved surface, noting increased usage and accessibility. Equestrian user would prefer the stone dust, but stone dust shoulders would work if the trail were paved. Craig said plans along the Granite State Rail Trail are to pave from Manchester southward, and Concord will also pave their section.

The powerlines are over the old railroad bed in most locations. Some sections are different, near the Merrimack River and the along the sewer line easement. Ammy said there were problems with drainage and slope on some areas of the former railbed. The group agreed an important next step is an engineering study that considers utility access, guard rails, drainage, and more. They also need to determine whether to pursue a non-profit status or not. Once the Conservation Commission has spoken with property owners and have a better idea where the easements might be located, (a potential Littlefield property easement was mentioned), progress can be made to determine the rail trail's location. **Craig said he would talk with CNHRPC staff to determine whether we could provide some engineering design services.**

Craig said in Allentown, an easement from one property owner will be needed for most of their trail, along with the China Mill property and bridge and Suncook River. Options for bridging the Suncook and Soucook include purchasing a prefabricated bridge or relocating an existing bridge in need of a home. The Town must know the situation for the abutments and be ready to fundraise. Kevin said he has access to steel beams and is working with an engineer. There are resources available, people just have to know people who have equipment and knowledge. He would like to see the Pembroke Rail Trail developed even if it is not a snowmobile trail.

Craig said CNHRPC is planning a June wrap up meeting when the final draft Suncook River Trail Plan will be presented. The group asked Carolyn to organize a meeting with Eversource discussed the need to hold meetings monthly to get organized. Getting the word out on social media and the internet, such as the Pembroke Taxpayers Facebook page, can help motivate residents and provide information and support for the Pembroke Rail Trail.

The meeting adjourned at 6:45.

Meeting Summary by Stephanie Alexander, CNHRPC | 603.226.6020 | salexander@cnhrpc.org

SUNCOOK VALLEY TRAILS PLAN

RECONVENING SESSION

WHEN

Tuesday, June 18

**6 PM optional Epsom
rail trail walk***

7 – 8 PM presentation

WHERE

**Epsom Central School
Gymnasium**

282 Black Hall Road, Epsom

All are welcome to attend.

Visit the CNHRPC.ORG/SUNCOOK-VALLEY-TRAILS-PLAN
webpage for more information about the project.

*** To participate in the walk, please meet us in
the parking lot at Water Street for a 6 PM
sharp start time. Wear hiking boots, bug
spray and proper attire. Light rain or shine!**

ALLENSTOWN
PEMBROKE
EPSOM
CHICHESTER
PITTSFIELD

PURPOSE

This meeting will recount the priority trail projects and trail concepts envisioned by the five communities during multiple public meetings held this spring. These community goals are the basis for a regional vision of multi-use trails and trail connectivity in the Suncook Valley, including sections of the historic **Suncook Valley Railroad's** former railbeds. Available for review at the meeting will be the draft **SUNCOOK VALLEY TRAILS PLAN** that describes these community and regional trail priorities and sets the stage for multi-jurisdictional collaboration and implementation of trail projects.

For questions or assistance, please
contact the **Central NH Regional
Planning Commission (CNHRPC):**
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