

Strafford Conservation Commission

Minutes

June 24, 2024

Strafford Town Office 7-8 PM

Micki Colbeck, Courtney Potter, Anne Fayen, Mike Hebb, Kate Bass, JT Erbaugh, Erin Yunger, Steve Faccio. Also attending: Kelly Harmon and Michael Sacca

1. Approve minutes from May 25, 2024, meeting.
2. Michael Sacca spoke about the history of the Manning Farm trail and expressed an interest in the SCC taking it on as one of our Town Trails. The trails are managed by the Upper Valley Land Trust and have already been built to their specifications. There is a couple who live nearby who are interested in maintaining the trail. There does not seem to be a need for us to adopt the trail, but we would be willing to promote it on our website as an independently managed trail system. *See below for a guide to Mike Hebb's parameters for the Strafford Trail System.
3. Trails report: Mike Hebb and David Paganelli will go out to inspect the ash trees at the Cobb Town Forest for Emerald Ash borer (EAB). Jeffery Gale has volunteered to help Kittie Mackie with maintaining the Alger Brook to Pennock trail, which is quite long and needs lots of work.
4. Kelly Harmon from the Selectboard spoke about the ten-year capital budget and advised us to submit any long-term big-ticket items we might have. She suggested submitting a salary for our trail manager, as Mike has done this as a volunteer for many years and may eventually need to turn it over to someone else. Good to establish a stipend for this job. Tim McCormick is paid for taking care of Old City Falls. Did he receive a pay raise as the SCC voted? Kelly will investigate this.

5. Kiosk: Kate and Micki looked at possible sites at the Park and Ride. Kate will ask the road foreman if a site they picked out will work. Discussion of costs of having it built or building it ourselves. We have \$1000 for the project that was given to us by the AVC. The kiosk at Cobb is nice. Maybe we should copy that and use the black locust timbers that were also donated from the Ashley Forest. Discussed the importance of making it nice and keeping it maintained.
6. Hikes and educational outreach programs: Micki and Mike led the Alger Brook to Pennock hike, with Jeffery Gale, Ed Huang and Beth Randall. Saturday's orchid hike had a family with two young girls who used our new loupes and were eager little naturalists. The orchids are abundant and stunningly beautiful. The Children's craft's gathering at Old City Falls is being changed to August 10th. Mike will ask Dick Josler for permission to lead a hike at the mines in late August.
7. Next meeting July 23, 2024, 7 PM Town Office.
8. Meeting adjourned.

* Mike Hebb's parameters for the Strafford trail system:

Over the years Mike has adopted certain parameters that have provided long-term success (over the last 18 years). The management system for the Strafford trail system is in place to maintain favorable landowner relations, preserve landowners' properties with minimal damage (no terraforming, nails in trees, minimal cutting etc.), and to ensure the trail provides access to some natural and/or cultural attractions (views, rare plants, archeological sites).

- Add, close or reroute trails as the manager chooses.
- Ensure that if a trail is closed it "disappears."
- Manage a team of maintenance volunteers.
- Monitor trails for quality and support a maintenance team.

- Publicize availability, changes, new trails, closures and seasonal attractions.
- Ensure new trails have accessibility, hiker attractions, a maintenance person, and landowner support.
- Ensure manager and maintenance teams are not booked beyond capacity.
- Support only human powered access.
- Monitor land transfers for trail ownership changes and get new permissions.
- Ensure all trails are treated equally (no separate rules for different trails).

Minutes by Courtney Potter