

Minutes

Hogback Preservation Commission

Marlboro, Vermont

The November 11, 2013 Regular Meeting of the Hogback Preservation Commission was called to order at 5:00 p.m. at the Marlboro Town Office by Hal Himmelstein, Chair.

Members Present: Christine Colella, Bob Engel, Hal Himmelstein, Lauren MacArthur, Ed Metcalfe, Mike Purcell, and Jim Tober.

Members Absent: None.

Also Attending: Bob Anderson, President HMCA.

The minutes of the September 9, 2013 meeting were accepted as distributed.

Officer, Committee and Liaison Reports

Chair's Report

The chair reviewed the status of the Endowment Fund, noting that the Fund's balance is approximately \$126,800 (CD + Money Market).

The Chair reported on the status of the proposed 140-foot cell tower and related equipment to be constructed on a property owned by VTel adjacent to the Conservation Area if approved by the Vermont Public Service Board. (Ed Metcalfe reported that VTel had favorably responded to his suggestion that VTel consider letting HMCA, HPC, and the Southern Vermont Natural History Museum use the Tea House facility which Ed sold to VTel along with the land.)

Conservation Commission Report

No report.

Planning Commission Report

No report.

HMCA Report

Bob Anderson reported that the HMCA board voted unanimously to take responsibility for trail maintenance and management under the policy purview of HPC. Tasks include maintaining the existing trail system, constructing new trails, and keeping trail maps

current. HMCA's trail crew will periodically check trails for obstructions and report to HPC on trail conditions, including erosion, litter, and needed repairs.

HMCA has asked Mike Purcell and Staley McDermet to survey and lay out a new, multi-use trail on the CA's south side. This switchback trail will connect sections of the former ski runs with the Bishop Trail, and will replace the existing Meadow Ski Run fall-line trail. The new trail will offer a more gradual slope and adhere to sound trail construction practices. Once the trail is designed, HMCA will present the details to HPC for review and consideration for inclusion into the existing trail system.

Four new mini-kiosks were constructed and installed on the CA's north side in October, and revised informational signage approved by HPC was placed on the three existing larger kiosks and two mini-kiosks (White's Loop Trail Head and Douglas Trail/Old Hogback Road intersection). Trail maps were placed on the new mini-kiosks at the northern entrances to the CA.

The ten-year Early Successional Habitat (ESH) project, managed by HMCA's Diana Todd, is well underway. Each of five major ski slopes will be cleared, one every two years, and then allowed to re-grow to provide habitat for a variety of species. Work on the Meadow Ski Run commenced in the fall. The four scheduled work days to date have had excellent volunteer turnout. Over the next several months HMCA will attempt to measure the impact on wildlife of this first phase of the project. (After an initial test cut early this summer there was widespread evidence of substantial browsing of the young shoots around recently cut stumps.)

Information and photos of the ESH project are available on HMCA's web site, www.hogbackvt.org.

Southern Vermont Natural History Museum Report

Ed Metcalfe reported that seven interpretive signs have been completed and installed along trails on the southern section of the CA. Ed noted that he has been supporting the museum financially to an extent that he will not be able to maintain in the future, and that the museum needs to look at all options to see that it continues to operate successfully without his support in future years. Hal asked Ed to keep the Commission apprised of future developments and Ed agreed.

Old Business

Bob Engel presented the following revised language to be added to the interpretive signage policy contained in the Management Plan and previously approved by HPC:

“Signs should be placed on six-inch locust posts and sunk to a depth that is sturdy and allows readers of all ages to view them.

The signs should be angled to shed water and to afford maximum legibility.

Laminated signs will better resist weather and UV degradation.

For the sake of consistency, sign dimensions should be 10-12 inches by 16-18 inches or, if more information is required, the long axis should be about 1.5 times greater than the short axis.”

The proposed Little Hogback Loop Trail (tabled at HPC’s July 2013 Regular Meeting) was brought forward for discussion and a vote. Mike Purcell moved that HPC recommend that the Marlboro Select board approve the addition of the Little Hogback Loop Trail to the Conservation Area trail system. Ed Metcalfe seconded. Lauren MacArthur noted that there were a few places on this trail that seemed vulnerable to erosion if used by mountain bikes. The commissioners were in agreement that this trail, like all trails in the CA, would be subject to closure if conditions warranted.

Motion M/S/P 6-0.

New Business

HMCA requested that the commission recommend to the Select board a 2014 CA budget totaling \$3,019. The proposed budget includes funding for educational events (MES Day and various events held throughout the year by HMCA and the Southern Vermont Natural History Museum); trail construction, maintenance, and signage; HMCA web site annual fee; support for the Vermont Audubon Bird Count Project; printing trail maps; interpretive signage support; the Conserving Habitat Variety (ESH) project; and stabilization and maintenance of historical structures in the CA.

Ed requested that HPC add a \$600 line item for support for the Vermont Wildlife Festival. Christine suggested that the Wildlife Festival needed to become more self-sustaining. Lauren thought that the event should continue to be free if possible. Hal asked Ed to provide an accounting of the museum’s past expenditures for the Wildlife Festival in order that the commission could better assess the proportion of its past support. Ed agreed to provide this information.

Jim Tober moved that the commission tentatively recommend the budget for Select board approval pending a decision on the museum’s request, with a final decision to be made in January. Bob Engel seconded.

M/S/P 6-0.

Consideration of a draft of the Hogback Mountain Conservation Area Map Policy for inclusion in the Management Plan was deferred until the HPC’s January meeting due to lack of time.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ed Metcalfe
Secretary pro tempore