

Minutes
Hogback Preservation Commission
Marlboro, Vermont

The March 12, 2012 regular meeting of the Hogback Preservation Commission was called to order at 5:02 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

Others Attending: Pieter van Loon (Vermont Land Trust), Jason Saltman & Ann Ottaviano, Town of Wilmington Trails Committee

The revised minutes of the January 16, 2012 Regular Meeting were approved as distributed.

Election of Officers: Hal Himmelstein was elected unanimously as Chair; Bob Engel as Vice Chair. Unanimous decision that the Secretary position rotate among the Commissioners, other than the Chair, on a pro tem basis.

Officer and Committee Reports

Chair's Report:

Floor turned over to Pieter van Loon, Vermont Land Trust Stewardship Forester. Pieter informed the Commission that in his newly-elected role as Marlboro Selectperson he must recuse self from "all things Hogback." VLT's Kerry Doyle will now serve as the Stewardship Manager for Hogback.

Audubon Vermont "Foresters for the Birds" project administrator Steve Hagenbuch is completing his assessment of the Conservation Area and will submit a formal document to the Commission this spring. Bob Engel agreed to be the Commission's project liaison. Bob is in the process of collecting baseline data on migratory song birds that nest in the Conservation Area. The initial data-gathering phase will last approximately two years. The compiled information will inform the development of a management strategy to enhance the song bird nesting habitat in the Conservation Area. A summary of the data will ultimately be included in the Management Plan as an Appendix.

HMCA Report: The annual HMCA Board of Directors meeting is tentatively scheduled for June 2012. At this time HMCA board members are hoping to reenergize the Association's committees and move forward in its various initiatives including science

and education outreach, recreational trails construction and maintenance, public information, and membership services.

Conservation Commission Report (Mike Purcell): The Conservation Commission is reviewing maps for various wildlife overlay districts. No determinations have been made as of yet. This review and research is necessary to better understand and pinpoint the wildlife road crossing points in the Hogback Mountain Conservation Area, especially those corridors that cross Route 9. This Conservation Commission work will assist the HPC in developing a strategy to properly manage the forest areas near the wildlife highway crossings to enhance wildlife protection.

Planning Commission Report (Jim Tober): The Planning Commission is in the process of collecting community input for Conservation ideas. Discussion ensued as to whether the Planning Commission should consider a separate zoning category for the Conservation Area and town parks. Perhaps these areas should be designated as part of a town resource conservation district and/or natural resource production zone. This can be discussed at a special Planning Commission meeting scheduled for March 29, 7pm, at the Marlboro Elementary School. VLCT will be at this public meeting to gather input on the town's approach to conservation values for the future.

Southern Vermont Natural History Museum Report (Ed Metcalfe): The Museum did not receive the Deerfield River Watershed Interpretive Trail grant for which it had applied. HPC's 2012 budget set aside \$1000 to support the development of an interpretive trail in the Conservation Area. Because the grant was not awarded, this money will not be spent at this time; however, the Commission will review other interpretive trail possibilities with HMCA and the Museum. On another fiscal note, \$1700 was awarded to the Museum through the Deerfield River Watershed grant program for educational program monies for schools and some equipment.

Vermont Land Trust Report (Pieter van Loon): As discussed in the Chair's report, Pieter will be stepping down as our official VLT liaison, and Kerry Doyle will now be monitoring our activities.

Old Business

The Commission voted unanimously to amend the Management Plan to formalize the 5 p.m. HPC meeting starting time (the original Management Plan officially states that the HPC meetings are held bi-monthly at 7 pm in January, March, May, July, September, and November on the 2nd Monday of the month). It was suggested that the Commission should amend the Management plan's administration section to remove references to the meeting time and other specific meeting details and procedures, and include this information in a separate formal document titled "Rules and Procedures of the Hogback Preservation Commission." Jim Tober informed other Commission members that the Planning Commission has such a document; he will forward that information to us for our review. The "Rules and Procedures of the Hogback Preservation Commission" document will be drafted and the matter revisited and discussed at the May meeting.

Consideration of a Landowner Permission Form for mountain bike use of designated trails in the Conservation Area. The Vermont Mountain Bike Association (VMBA) has a standard form, used throughout the state. HPC can adopt the form and include any specific restrictions it chooses to apply. By using this form, the landowner in effect issues a license to the state organization for its members to mountain bike on designated trails in the Conservation Area. Upon review of the permission form, it was unanimously decided that HPC did not want to use this form. HPC will inform HMCA that it needs to prepare signage that will designate which Conservation Area trails are open to mountain biking. It is the hope that this trail marking will be completed sometime this spring. The bike friendly trails will be indicated on trail markers, the trail head Kiosks, and on the official trails map. Mike Purcell will notify Hoot, Toot & Whistle mountain bike club members of the trails on which mountain biking is permitted.

Review of the Conservation Area's approved 2012 budget. The Select Board has asked the Commission to reconsider its decision not to use Endowment Funds for the 2012 Vermont Wildlife Festival. The Commissioners discussed this and unanimously voted to transfer \$400 from the line item budgeted for educational stipends to create a separate line item for support of the Wildlife Festival. The Commissioners expressed their desire that HMCA encourage educational event leaders to provide their services on a pro bono basis in the future (many already do this). This would include both individual events during the year and "facilitators" at the annual MES Day event.

New Business

Proposal and Request by the Wilmington Trail Committee to collaborate in developing an interconnected trail network encompassing the Conservation Area trail system and Molly Stark State Park trails. Jason Saltman and Ann Ottaviano, representing the Wilmington Trail Committee, proposed the coordination of signage and public information regarding the connection of the Wilmington trail system, the Conservation Area trail system, and Molly Stark State Park's Mount Olga loop trail. The Wilmington Trail Committee would like to collaborate with the HPC and the State Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation to develop an accessible interconnected trail network. Jason distributed maps of how the trails already connect and would like the three parties to develop signage and collaborate as needed. The Wilmington Trail Committee will provide signage on the southern border of Molly Stark where the Park connects with the Wilmington trails; signage should also be displayed at the Kiosk at the top of Mt. Olga and at the northwest corner of the Conservation Area that abuts private lands through which the Wilmington trails lead to the Lake Raponda area. The Wilmington Trail Committee proposes producing a map of the three interconnected areas for review sometime in the early summer. The HPC will discuss this proposal and vote on a final resolution of this "trail collaboration" at May's meeting.

Consideration of a “Special Use Permit for a Group Event or Organized Activity” form. The Commission discussed a proposed draft of a Special Use Permit form and voted to table this discussion for its May meeting.

Proposed rerouting of White’s Loop trail to avoid crossing private property. The Commission reviewed a working map of the proposed reroute of White’s Loop, prepared by HMCA’s Diana Todd, and unanimously agreed to establish this new route. HMCA Trail Crew will flag the new section, clear the trail tread in March and April, and blaze the new section in May. The trail blazes on the abandoned portion of White’s Loop will be neutralized. The interim trail map will be updated to reflect the change.

Proposal to prohibit further trail development in the Conservation Area. Given the amount of discussion this proposal will entail, the Commission voted to table the discussion for its May meeting.

Disposition of unused structures in Conservation Area. Mike Purcell and Ed Metcalfe volunteered to survey the unused structures to determine the scope of work necessary to either repair these structures or tear them down and remove them from the Conservation Area. Mike and Ed will report their preliminary findings to the full Commission at its May meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:10 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Christine Colella
3/29/12