

Regular Meeting of the Hogback Preservation Commission
5 p.m. Thursday, November 6, 2025
Zoom Call Meeting Online & In Person
Marlboro Town Office

Minutes

Abbreviations used:

DVSJ = Deerfield Valley Stump Jumpers

FUA = Facility Use Agreement

HMCA = Hogback Mountain Conservation Association

HPC = Hogback Preservation Commission

SB = Select Board

VAST = Vermont Association of Snow Travelers

VLT = Vermont Land Trust

Present (all in person, no attendees via Zoom):

Committee members: Mike Purcell (Chair), Ed Metcalfe (Vice-Chair), Diana Todd (Secretary),

Sarah Fisher

Guest: Nancy Anderson (representing HMCA, joined at 5:15)

1. The meeting was called to order at 5:01 pm.
2. The Agenda was reviewed, no changes were made.
3. Review of Membership and Duties.
 - a. Departing member Sarah Grant was heartily thanked for her many years of service on the commission.
 - b. New member Sarah Fisher was welcomed.
 - c. Open Meeting protocols were reviewed.
 - d. The role and duties of HPC were reviewed:
 - i. Advise the SB on recurring/ongoing relationships with entities such as VAST and the National Grid.
 - ii. Implement tasks outlined in the Management Plan, including creating a Forest Inventory/Forest Management Plan, and demolishing the Benedict Cottage.
 - iii. Review and approve
 1. FUA applications (permits for special uses)
 2. proposed new trails
4. Minutes of three previous meetings were approved: July 10, 2023, Aug 21, 2023, and Mar 10, 2025.
5. Officer and committee reports
 - a. Chair's report – There have been no reports of damage or vandalism to any of the buildings, other structures, or trails.
 - b. HMCA report – HMCA Activities Update dated November 2025 was reviewed. See the HMCA website for a copy.
 - c. VMNH report. Ed reported that the Museum no longer has any presence at the Hogback overlook. The live animals are housed at the Pool Nature Center on

Adams Cross Road, and the rest of the collection is in storage in Brattleboro. He suggested that a regular report may no longer be a necessary part of the HPC agenda, and suggested contacting Mike Clough, the Museum Director, for his opinion. Diana will do so.

6. Old business

- a. Report on demolition of the First Aid Building
 - i. Mike reported that once started, this past summer, the work went quickly and the site seemed to be well cleaned up.
 - ii. Ed noted that it appeared that the site had never been seeded, and expressed concern about potential future erosion. Mike will contact the Road Foreman to see if the Town can seed and mulch the site.
 - iii. Ed described a flagged pipe that seems to mark the outlet of the spring located upslope, which formerly was used to fill a cistern under the First Aid Building. Ed noted that he holds an easement which grants him access to that spring and the piped flow. Nothing is flowing now. It is not clear if the pipe has a shut-off valve, or whether the flow is controlled solely by the height of the water in the spring.
- b. Management Plan update – Significant actions called for in the updated plan which are the responsibility of the HPC were reviewed.
 - i. Develop Forest Inventory and Forest Management Plan – County Forester Sam Schneski and VLT Forester Pieter van Loon have agreed to develop these documents. They have not yet started the effort because Sam is still waiting to acquire improved software for this type of work. Therefore the Inventory will not be completed by the Dec 31, 2025 target date specified in the Management Plan.
 - ii. Dismantle Benedict Cottage – It was agreed that HPC would start exploring options for this project in the upcoming year.
- c. Email address for HPC – As requested at the last meeting, Diana looked into getting an email address for the HPC. Other town commissions which have email addresses, such as the Conservation Commission, use gmail addresses. Diana created a gmail account for HPC, but has not started using it. In the past, committees could easily share responsibility for monitoring email accounts simply by sharing the login id and password with members. That no longer works in today's more security conscious environment, even if two-factor identification is explicitly turned off. The need for an HPC email account was reviewed – we could think of only one time in the past 15 years when someone reported being unable to contact HPC (when the chair was out of the country for several weeks). We decided to shelve the idea and bring it up again if and when there seemed to be a pressing need for it.

7. New business

- a. VAST, through its local chapter DVSJ, submitted its annual Landowner Permission Form to HPC. HPC has no special concerns this year that need to be spelled out on the form. Mike will forward the form to the SB with a recommendation that they approve the request.
- b. HMCA submitted their review of a FUA application from Rootstock Racing for an orienteering event (off-trail foot navigation with map and compass) to be held

as part of a five-day adventure race in southern Vermont on June 22-27, 2026. The five-day event is called “Endless Mountains Vermont” and will involve about 50 teams of 2-4 individuals.

- i. HMCA supports this application – provisionally. Rootstock needs early provisional approval in order to be sure the entire five-day sequence of events/locations will work, but they haven’t yet visited the site to specify the exact areas of the conservation area that they will use.
- ii. HMCA believes this type of event (organized by Rootstock, (a 501(c)3 non-profit) is an appropriate use of the conservation area, and that it will not interfere with the public’s enjoyment of the trails.
- iii. Competitors will be walking off-trail, but the course will be designed so that they will not be likely to encounter vernal pools, the area with known rare orchids, or other environmentally sensitive locations.
- iv. Some competitors may choose to do the Hogback orienteering at night, but organizers expect the vast majority will do it during daylight hours. No one will camp overnight in the conservation area.
- v. Competitors will not descend on Hogback in a big group – they will trickle in and out as they complete the previous challenges in the five day event. Teams are required to have first aid training and supplies, and will practice Leave No Trace principals.
- vi. It was moved, seconded, and approved that HPC forward the application to the SB for *provisional* approval. HMCA will continue to work with Rootstock during their on-site visit and planning of final details. If there are any substantial changes to the provisional plan, HMCA will keep HPC informed.

- c. HMCA suggested that the FUA application form needs to be revised to reflect what we’ve learned during the past year while using the new form and new approval procedures. HPC agreed, noting that we do not plan to change the Management Plan section on permits, only the Appendix that contains the application form itself. A Working Group was formed, consisting of Nancy Anderson (HMCA) and Diana Todd and Mike Purcell (HPC).
- d. Trash dumping – Last month, furniture and appliances were dumped on the Old Hogback Road. HPC reported it to the Town Administrator, and the town Road Crew picked up and disposed of the trash. We considered whether HPC needed to establish a more formal procedure or fund to deal with this kind of problem, and decided it was not necessary.
- e. HPC learned that a proposal for a new trail is being developed by VMNH to connect the conservation area with the Pool Nature Center on Adams Cross Road. We reviewed the Management Plan philosophy for new trails (concentrate recreation along the existing trail corridor while leaving large tracts trail-less), and reviewed the procedure for approving new trails. Proposals should be submitted to the HMCA Trail Committee. After they review and approve a trail, the HMCA Board is invited to review the path. HMCA then forwards the proposal to the HPC. The proposed trail is already flagged for review. Nancy Anderson is currently the Chair of the HMCA Trails Committee. She will organize a walk for Trail Committee members to look at the proposed route.

- f. If the Town Office meeting space is available, the next HPC meeting will be held on Jan 15, 2026, the third Thursday of the month instead of the first, because the first Thursday falls on New Years Day. Diana will check with Nick Morgan, Town Administrator, to confirm the date.
8. The meeting was adjourned at 6:11 pm.