

Minutes of Regular Meeting of the Hogback Preservation Commission
5 p.m. Thursday, May 7, 2026
Zoom Call Meeting Online & In Person
Marlboro Town Office

Minutes

Abbreviations used:

FUA = Facility Use Agreement

HMCA = Hogback Mountain Conservation Association

HPC = Hogback Preservation Commission

MP = Management Plan

PNC = Pool Nature Center

SB = Select Board

VMNH = Vermont Museum of Natural History

1. The meeting was called to order at 5:02 pm.
2. The agenda was reviewed and it was agreed to take items out of order, with Museum related items discussed first so that Jack Widness could get to another meeting. Despite that change, these minutes present the information in the order of the original agenda.
3. Attendance: Present in person - HPC members Mike Purcell, Ed Metcalfe, Sarah Fisher, and Diana Todd. Also Jack Widness, President of the Board of the Vermont Museum of Natural History/Pool Nature Center, and Nancy Anderson, HMCA Secretary. There were no attendees via Zoom.
4. Minutes of the previous meeting (Jan 15, 2026) were approved.
5. Annual administrative tasks
 - a. The Rules of Procedure were reviewed and re-adopted unchanged.
 - b. Officers were elected unanimously: Mike Purcell as Chair, Ed Metcalfe as Vice-Chair. Prior to the vote, we clarified the expiration dates of Mike's and Ed's terms on the HPC, and determined that both terms expire in 2030.
6. Officer and committee reports
 - a. Chair's report
 - i. HPC had received an informal report that the SB, in an effort to streamline their administrative tasks, has modified the VAST agreement for trail use so that it no longer requires an annual renewal, but is considered valid until revoked by the town. Standard VAST procedures are to request landowner permission every year. Mike will contact VAST and see if they are comfortable with the "approved until revoked" approach.
 - ii. Regarding the National Grid lease covering use of the Tower Trail to access their building at the summit of Mount Olga, HPC received an informal report that the SB wanted to encourage HPC to keep a close eye on the condition of the Tower Trail. According to the terms of the lease, the Town is responsible for maintaining the trail in a condition sufficient to support light trucks. The Town Road Crew will not be responsible for doing that work. When the need arises, HPC should arrange to have a contractor do the work. \$1,000 per year of the lease fee paid by National Grid is set

aside to fund that work. The SB would rather see those funds used for frequent minor fixes than wait until a problem has become massive. It was not clear whether the process for hiring a contractor should be initiated by contacting the Treasurer or the SB.

- iii. Discussion of the National Grid lease continued with a question about how the bulk of the lease monies are allocated. Diana had heard that a special account had been set up for the \$1,000 per year dedicated to Tower Trail maintenance, but Nancy had heard that the idea of establishing a Capital Account for holding the National Grid lease monies had been rejected. At the HPC January 15, 2026 meeting, the idea of asking the SB to establish a Capital Account for Hogback had been endorsed. That idea was refined to include requesting that a significant portion of the National Grid money be contributed to the fund every year. Sarah will take the lead in collecting information to support this idea. The goal is to present the plan to the SB in time for inclusion in the yearly budget that will be approved at the March 2027 Annual Meeting of the town. We will try to time the effort so that if the SB rejects the idea, we will still have time to collect signatures to add the item to the agenda of the Annual Meeting for decision by the voters.
- iv. Mike reported that the town website has now been updated to reflect the 2023-2024 work done on updating the Management Plan, and the recent revision of the FUA application process.
- b. HMCA report
 - i. HMCA presented information on trail conditions, upcoming events (both HMCA-sponsored and activities organized by other groups), and the early spring status of invasive plants.
 - ii. Nancy asked for input about whether improved signage leading to the trail head might help people gather for group events. Issues of parking and safety when crossing Route 9 were discussed. Ed indicated that it was OK to have groups gather in the Distillery parking lot.
- c. Museum report
 - i. Jack noted that John Greene had stepped down as President of the Museum Board, and that he (Jack) was the new President. Mike Clough (Executive Director) will be leaving at the end of June. A search is underway for his replacement. New Board members are also being recruited.
 - ii. A Bioblitz is scheduled for Sat, May 16.
 - iii. The Pool Nature Center will again be hosting a summer camp for school children.
 - iv. The Museum is participating in the Marlboro Economic Development Club, which has led to some new ideas for fundraising activities.
 - v. The Board is working with a consultant to facilitate the ongoing transitions on the Board and the staff.
- 7. Old business
 - a. The changes to the FUA (permit) procedures that HPC approved at their last meeting were shared with HMCA and VLT, who both endorsed the changes. Because the FUA procedure and form are part of the Management Plan, SB approval for the changes was sought and received in mid-March. Both the HMCA and town websites have been updated to include the new FUA form and procedure.
 - b. Progress on actions called for in the Management Plan were reviewed.

- i. County Forester Sam Schneski indicated that the Forest Inventory was about 2/3 complete. He expects to finish it by the end of May. Sam is coordinating with Tim Duclos of Vermont Audubon, who has offered to do a bird habitat inventory that will supplement the Forest Inventory. After these studies are complete, Sam will start developing a proposed Forest Management Plan that will reflect the goals defined in the Hogback Management Plan.
 - ii. The need for funding in order to dismantle Benedict Cottage was discussed as part of the Chair's report. (See above.) We decided to hold a Special Meeting at 8:00 am on Saturday, May 30 to examine the current condition of Benedict Cottage. The HMCA Board will be invited to join us.
 - c. The proposed new trail linking HMCA to the Pool Nature Center, having been reviewed and approved by the HMCA Trail Committee and the HMCA Board, was unanimously approved.
8. New business
- a. HPC will participate in the May 17 Marlboro Volunteer Organization Fair.
9. The meeting was adjourned at 6:12 pm. The next regular meeting will be on Thursday, July 2.