

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

SEPTEMBER 22, 2014

TOWN HALL/MEETINGHOUSE

7:00 P.M.

The following are to be considered draft minutes until approved by the Board.

Selectmen present: Chairman, Don Hill; Leigh Callaway and George McCusker.

Meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. Don read the Selectmen Meeting Guidelines.

Others present from Deer Hill Road, other town residents, MVST members, club members from other towns, and the Grafton County Executive Director of NHSA.

Don reported this meeting (not a hearing) was scheduled due to concerns regarding snowmobile use on Deer Hill Road. Three years ago the snowmobile club (Mascoma Valley Snow Travelers) approached the Selectmen about using a portion of Deer Hill Road to get to the other side of I 89 for temporary access until a permanent solution could be found. The Board recently received 5 letters from property owners on Deer Hill addressing concerns. The letters are available for public inspection. Don asked Josh Worthen, President MVST, if he had seen the letters and asked for status on the trail.

(MVST provided trail and google maps of the area in question.)

Josh reported he had not seen the letters. Members have investigated large pieces of property owned by Webb Forest Trust, Hayes Trust, and the Arts Camp (RSM) for trail possibilities. Web would grant indefinite use of his land that abuts the rest area, but they can't get access through the abutting land near the cell tower. Access out of Springfield is blocked due to I89. Mr. Rifkin has indicated he would be ok with the trail running along the deer fence to 89. Josh has reached out to the Charpentier's a few times, but has had no response. The Hayes Trust feels it is too risky. Star Lake Farm has approved trails through their property but there is no way to get around Baptist Pond. The club feels it is too risky to be on the pond, and the groomers would not be insured on the pond. One mile of Deer Hill Road is used to get to the underpass and would be about 2/10ths of a mile if they could get along the deer fence. To keep off Baptist Pond involves Arts Camp, Hayes Trust or Garfield. One other landowner on the other side of the pond would grant permission but only with the construction of a large steel bridge. Numerous attempts to get thru the Grantham underpass. A subdivision a few years ago created issues there. Josh noted the State provides a 2 million dollar insurance policy for landowners with trails crossing their property. Snowmobilers do not like riding the road and would prefer a trail. Without a clear trail system through town, there is concern the club may not last. Funding dollars would decrease and the expenses could become too great. The trail to Sunapee (primary 349) which includes Deer Hill does not get the snowmobile traffic there used to be when Corridor 5 ran through town. Corridor 5 has been rerouted behind Whaleback and around Corbin Park. These trails are never going to be as heavily traveled as they were when it was Corridor 5 and there are no town services for food or fuel.

Following Josh's presentation discussion is summarized as follows:

Residents questions/concerns:

- Feels too dangerous to walk on the road anymore. The road has sharp curves and rises in the road, with poor visibility. It is not the traffic, it is the volume. Has never been bothered by snowmobiles until last winter. Appreciates the dilemma faced by both sides.
- Are there any North or South Routes? Response: Springfield can't get to Stocker Pond in Grantham. Can go north to Canaan and then work back to the South.
- How do people from Keene or Claremont get to Canaan? Response: Most likely through Corridor 5 trail behind Whaleback to rail bed in Lebanon and into Canaan.
- Concern that this is not just local traffic riders come from all over.
- If Town decides to use Deer Hill Road, would like to see more policing on weekends.
- Snowmobiles do not just stay on the right, they swerve back and forth across the road
- Shoulders on Deer Hill are narrow; paved roads have larger shoulders. Deer Hill Road is narrow, problem is so many curves and blind spots. The amount of traffic is distressing.
- There is a lot of motorized traffic of all sorts in Springfield. Need to consider not just now but what the situation is going to be like in the future. Do snowmobilers have more or fewer rights than anyone else? Too much traffic could alter the environment, require removing trees, and widening of the road and change, in a radical way, the nature of the community. We can't all have the hobbies that we would like to have, there has to be some give and take and a reasonable balance with respect given for people who have been here for many generations. Can we preserve what we have had?
- Snowmobile trails need to be safe. People skiing and snowshoeing choose to be on snowmobile trails. Not everyone wants to be surrounded by traffic when hiking. Deer Hill Road is not ideal and it would be nice to find a solution, though there is the feeling there is not a solution available. Noise is an issue. Can't we find a solution other than where people have opted out of noise and being disturbed? Maybe something else can be found so as not to alienate the community
- Trail runs 25' from one resident's front door.

MVST discussion:

- If the trail doesn't connect to Sunapee – reduces hours and funding for the groomer
- The club has about 80 miles of trail, mostly in Springfield. Club membership is in excess of 100 members. Not all are snowmobile users. The trails are maintained by volunteers, mostly residents or taxpayers in town.
- 9 residents on Hogg Hill Road allow the trail to pass through their property, so a lot of the traffic from Deer Hill Road passes through their yards as well.
- Now that trail is no longer a corridor trail, the estimated average use on a busy day would be 30 to 60. IN the past 100 was not uncommon.
- People get to Sunapee Trail system and are able to make a loop around Springfield.
- Access to the South is restricted due to pond crossings in Sunapee and Grantham.
- Estimated time frame for riding is Early January to Mid-March with about 2 months of good snow conditions.
- State has recently changed speed limit on shared roads to 20 mph, but the Town Governing body has the right to set a limit, currently posted at 10 MPH.
- Perhaps more signage and an effort toward education would be helpful.

- MVST has investigated getting to the rest area and riding the side of the Interstate to the underpass but the State won't allow it.
- Access through the sandpit at the end of Sanborn Hill Road back to Grantham has been investigated, but costs are exorbitant.
- There are snowmobile trails along roads that are busier than Deer Hill Road.
- Riders encounter walkers, cross country skiers, and people snow shoeing. There will always be people who do not follow the rules; most slow down and make room for pedestrians.
- Trails are kept maintained by the club and used by hikers, bikers, horseback riders or for logging access etc. year-round where allowed by landowners.
- Noted from RSA - snowmobiles that share roads should ride on the right as tight to the shoulder as possible and maintain speeds acceptable to conditions.

Jeff Haley, MVST member and Hogg Hill Road Resident with a trail on his property, stated ultimately they would love to get the trail off Deer Hill Road. Presently there do not seem to be other options. If the energy from this meeting could be harnessed to come up with a solution, perhaps utilizing Star Lake Farm as much as possible to get to the underpass, then that could be an ultimate solution.

Selectmen questions/concerns:

- George asked Chief Julian his observations: Tim stated when he has received complaints, directed patrols have been done and he has seen "0" snowmobiles. Patrols included weekend hours.
- After having received the letters, Leigh drove the road and understands the concerns
- Don noted he spoke with Road Agent, Peter Abair. Peter stated, as a snowmobiler, it is not his first choice to ride the road, and places a lot of wear and tear on the snowmobile. He would hate to see the connection eliminated. Star Lake is a beautiful area to snowmobile through. He has not encountered problems.
- Don also spoke to Todd Richardson at Star Lake Farm – They have no complaints, no problems with trash or debris, speeders or people trespassing in unauthorized places. Dan Thorne has offered access toward Baptist Pond, but then the trail can't be completed the rest of the way.
- Safety is first and foremost, but maintaining access is important too. The battle isn't Deer Hill Road, it is what the solution is.

Evelyn Farrell, Grafton Director of the New Hampshire Snowmobile Association, and President of the Dorchester Club, stated that NH has 7,000 miles of snowmobile trails ranging from Mass. Border to Canada, and Maine to Vermont. Many in attendance have shared their situations and discussed coming up with solutions. What she hasn't heard mentioned is snowmobiling in the State brings in \$586 million to the economy directly and indirectly. NH depends on tourism and snowmobiling is one part of that. Except for two positions, all personnel and trail maintenance is taken care of by volunteers. There are 110 clubs in NH all run by volunteers. She would hope a solution can be found for this situation.

Leigh stated he would like to see the club and property owners get together and decide a better route for all parties concerned before he makes a decision to continue the Deer Hill Trail or shut it down to MVST. He believes there is still time to get this done, and there seems to be enthusiasm expressed here to do so. Don noted that Star Lake has land and is willing to help, but they do not own the piece to complete it.

Josh stated the club would be willing to start on a new trail as soon as possible if a solution is offered. The club's website is available for anyone wishing to reach out to the club at www.mascomavalleysnowtravelers.com and also on Facebook.

The Selectmen would like an update at their next meeting on October 13th.

Following a short recess the meeting reconvened at 8:05 p.m.

Those who stayed for the remainder of the meeting: John Trachy, Ed Belfield, Justin Hastings, Bryan O'Day, Tom Duling, Ali Wheeler, Bill Huntoon, Mike Lawlor and Chief of Police, Tim Julian.

Minutes of September 11, 2014: George moved to approve, seconded by Leigh and unanimously approved.

Projects list: Expedited review.

Leigh added: #141 - The rafts at the beach need new ladders (Priority A for next year's budget)
#145 Carpeting at the church (priority B)
#147 Outside corner trim at Town Hall should have special primer/filler next time it is painted to smooth out rougher places (priority C)
#147 Sign on front of Town Hall needs replacing. Historical society as well. (Priority B)

Motion made by Don to approve putting the above items on the project list. Motion seconded by George and unanimously approved.

Leigh will explore solutions to the town hall and historical society sign.
George would like to be sure the ladders are part of next year's budget.

Unfinished business: Heating estimates for 2015 budget. George reported he has reached out to Mason. He would like Don to follow up.

Update budget: Leigh reported according to his revised worksheets after the decision was made to defer the paving and to replace the septic system, he estimates a fund balance of about \$65,000. Don noted this does not lessen the Board's commitment to keeping a tight rein on the budget.

Don asked if there has been any further communication regarding paving Oak Hill Road. He had heard there had been a request made. There has been no further communication.

Board and Department Updates:

Planning Board: Don reported the UVLSRPC did not have anything new available regarding zoning amendments but they should have a draft and timeline by the end of the month.

Wonderwell came in with a conceptual plan and are well underway for applying for a Site Plan Review Hearing. They still have quite a bit to do and their next step will include the Fire Chief, who will most likely want to bring in a State Rep. for assistance. They have a plan for handicap ramp and some parking, as well as creating additional parking area. They have 3 cabins proposed down the hill, but no other specifics. Areas where tent are allowed or not were not put on the plan. The Board recommended they do so. They most likely will file for a joint hearing with the ZBA for October.

Correspondence:

Copy of letter of appreciation to Frank Anderson from Doris Sayer for the mowing and care of the cemetery she and others noted at a recent DAR ceremony there. Leigh noted Rick Corbett also works hard to assist Frank.

Copy of list for final tax deed notices sent for properties with unpaid 2011 taxes in jeopardy of being deeded to the Town if taxes are not paid by October 20th.

Water quality report for town office came back within normal limits.

Purchase order information from Advanced Onsite Solutions. Leigh will contact them tomorrow to see about deposit requirements and invoicing.

Property Liability Trust rate setting meeting October 2nd at 10:00 a.m. at Lebanon City Hall.

Notice of upcoming meetings and workshops from the NH Timber Owner's Association.

Signatures:

Revised building permit approved for MacKenna/Dashner on Shad Hill Road for setback adjustment for the garage.

Letter from John Downing regarding his intention to design a septic system when he returns from vacation for the Call Property on Route 4A for relocating the existing house. Board in agreement cannot approve a building permit without approved design.

Building permit approved for deck addition for Witten on Hogg Hill Road.

Estimate for \$450.00 for Old Highway Garage siding and window repair from Bill Huntoon signed.

Intent to Cut Timber for Wentworth on George Hill Road approved.

Miscellaneous business: Don will sign checks beginning October 2nd; Leigh will do November, and George will do December.

Opening bids for the highway truck will be done at the October 13th meeting as well as opening bids for the sale of the tax deeded property.

The Revaluation start up meeting will be held Monday October 6th at 9:00 a.m.

Leigh reported the new website is "alive and well". E-mails are no longer being sent through the old system. In order to receive e-mail notices people must go to the website at www.springfieldnh.org to sign up. The website sends to those who have signed up. The Selectmen encourage people to remember to sign up.

Don would like to see a page on the old domain directing people to the new website, if possible.

Meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Minutes submitted by,
Janet Roberts,
Administrative Assistant