

Thursday March 10, 2021

Meeting began at 6:33 pm

Facilitating: Laura Ginsburg

Planning Commission Members Present: Janet Wells, Brenda Fields, Nancy Chapman, Dan Ruddell, Shane Young, Israel Provocha

Public Present: Michael Sacca, Todd Tyson, Scott Beavers, Eliza Minnucci, Matt Frost, John Echeverria, Sean Ogle, Mariah Lawrence, Kevin Rose, Fern Strong, Elizabeth Brown, Paul H., Ray Williams, Olive Sedon, Liz York, Maureen McCullough, Wright Frost, Zachary Hozid, Thornton Hayslett, Lydia Flanagan, Allison Ericson, Fred Pond, Anita's iPad, dansedonibook, unknown #*¹

Review of agenda

Review of Zoom protocol (muting, raise hand feature)

Review of discourse expectation

- Complicated and layered issue with lots of details which deserves a thorough review in order to make the best decision for the town

Review of Planning Commission meeting on 3/4

- Subcommittee to contact landowners, and experts to walk trails
- Survey has been pushed back until after Town Meeting
- Town Meeting presentation

Review of webpage

- Updated resource guide
- A walk through the answers provided by the Vermont League of Cities and Towns to questions asked by the PC

Trail User Input

Matt Frost

- Concerned about precedent setting if legal trails are closed or limited
- Legal Trails have been on bike maps since the early 2001

¹ *Unidentified, via Zoom name

- STRAVA app shows trails but also light use of them
- Tunbridge is looking to attract young families and competing with other towns - outdoor recreation is important in that choice

Point of clarification from Laura G.: landowners do own the land where legal trails pass but cannot decide what to do with them - decision by the town

Eliza Minnucci

- Has visited the different legal trails
- Three Points:
 1. Roads allow easy access to other parts of town while avoiding main highways, especially for children
 2. Access to green spaces is a Vermont tradition and somewhat unique to Vermont. Important to community and needs to be fostered
 3. Want young families to come to Tunbridge and outdoor recreation is important to them
- Restricting access in off seasons important

Liz York

- Upper Valley has always had a vibrant mountain biking community
- Little negative experience on trails between different users
- Tunbridge has few ordinances - do not want to be like other towns and this is a source of pride

Scott Beavers

- Has been using trails for 25 years
- Has not seen a lot of bike use on them
- Trails provide a place where people can take in the history, vegetation, etc. = best way to see and experience Tunbridge
- Town trails are an asset to the town

Allison Ericson

- Hiking, skiing, snowshoeing are all benefits to living in VT
- Alarmed by the potential of limiting trail use

Mariah Lawrence

- Have to create a plan an approach that reflect town values
- A key part of Tunbridge and Vermont culture is sharing land

- Trails connect children which may draw people to Tunbridge

Todd Tyson

- Tunbridge has a healthy, connected community through different organizations
- Legal trails are precious resources that are unique
- Is a bike event organizer: no large groups using trails

Michael Sacca

- Showed a presentation that:
 - Reviewed the legal trails map
 - Showed different laws defining legal trails, landowner rights, etc.
- Emphasized the importance of outdoor recreation and active lifestyles
- Maintenance of trails leads to a conservation ethic
- Bike events like the Ranger are good for the local economy
- Policy needs to be consistent among legal trails - limiting some could be a slippery slope

Wright Frost

- Representing the voice of young people
- The unique locations of legal trails make them popular
- Limitation on them would be detrimental to the town's future

Public Comments:

John Echeverria

- Supports public access and use of legal trails but opposed to expansion of use beyond hiking
- Has had negative experiences with bikers on the legal trail
- Showed maps of legal trails, reviewed where different bike events occur, and noted only two of the legal trails are usable
- Lots of opportunities to use other roads to bike - class 3 and 4 roads

Sean Ogle

- Works with landowners on trails and has spent years building and maintaining trails
- Would like to be part of the PC walks to discuss mitigating impacts on trails

Matt Frost

- Offered perspective on conflicts between landowners and cyclists

- Most of the legal trails are used by people

Maureen McCullough

- Has experienced challenges with people using the legal trails and horses
- Tunbridge has passed other ordinances that are not enforced
- As a member of the Walking Group talked to landowners who had issues with trail use
- Speed of bikes could cause risk

Liz York

- Question: Can you put a gate across a legal trail? Does the Selectboard grant special permission for gates?

Next meeting is Wednesday March 10 at 6:30 pm. Agenda is still under development. It will be the last legal trails informational meeting.

Meeting Adjourned: 8:09 pm