

NORTHFIELD OPEN SPACE CMTE

Sept. 20, 2016 7:30 PM

TOWN HALL LAND USE ROOM

Present: Jerry Wagener, Chair; Sue Ross, Robin Conley, Mike Barry, Julia Blyth, Bob Hall
Absent: Joanne McGee
Guests: Sam & Barbara Richardson, Brenda and Arthur Davis, Howard Hastings, Bill Llewellyn, Amanda Lewis, DCR, Jennifer Soper, DCR, JT Horn, TPL, Craig Hefner

Meeting was called to order at 7:33 p.m. Informative round table introductions were made.

J T Horn presented a chronological history of the land sale process of the Northfield State Forest from NMH to DCR, how the plan fell apart 2 days prior to Town Meeting and the Article had to be passed over, but by June 30 J T as the TPL Project Manager was able to close a sale of approximately 1300 acres. This is called Phase I. He stated that the show of support from the community helped pass Phase I. He continues to work on Phase II which involves the sale of the water company and the surrounding approximately 300 acres of watershed land which Northfield may manage or possibly buy. The lack of a filtration system is a major hurdle and the option of installing wells is being discussed.

J T opened the meeting to questions. We discussed the uses and management of the 1300 acres which DCR bought and the need to get the town and DCR together to begin plans to do so. It was agreed that getting a new state forest "up and running" is a big challenge.

Jen Soper, DCR Land Protection Specialist, handed out maps. She stated that the Northfield State Forest was the missing link of contiguous forest land from the Quabbin to Mt. Cardigan in New Hampshire. She said the key DCR staff involved in the initial planning of Northfield State Forest are as follows:

Resource assessment: Jen Soper, Amanda Lewis, and Jess Ropa, sr person

Operations: Bill Hill and Keith DiNardo

District Mgr: Dwayne Erickson (who is now at Erving State Forest)

Jen shared that an inventory is the first step. Inventories will be of natural, manmade and archeological elements. Included is forestry and recreational trails. Amanda Lewis has begun the inventory. Second step is an initial management recommendation, with a goal date of March, 2017.

We all agreed that making kiosks and establishment of parking areas are a good start. Also, there is great confusion about existing trails. Various trail maps were presented. Sam Richardson said he knows of 3 trail heads, down from 5. Arthur and Brenda Davis talked about trail markers in an early stage of setup, but no one was sure where those trail markers came from. Craig Hefner had another trail map. Amanda Lewis is using a GPS system to assess, restore the trail system. We talked about the need to do clean up and making sure there are no negative effects from the creation of trails.

Sam Richardson passed out his paper, "Comments Submitted to OSC Meeting 9/20/16." His hopes are that his vision of the Northfield Trail System will be acknowledged and will continue to grow.

People shared how Notch Mtn is a great destination for a trail. We discussed the use of trails by snow mobiles, horses, and ATVs.

Jen Soper suggested we look online at the DCR Guidelines and Best Practices to Trail Systems. This guideline addresses a lot of questions of community concerns.

Jerry asked what is next and how best to get community people to work with DCR. It is Amanda's job to develop the trail system. She passed around a handout, "Trail System Recommendations" which gives an overview of primary trail system mgt issues, planning, operation and maintenance, and capital needs.

Amanda also handed out topo maps of the trail work she has done, and she will contact Jerry when she has the initial work done. There will then be a community group meeting to move forward.

J T stated he was thrilled how the state forest is progressing, and we gave him a hearty round of applause for all his efforts. Craig Hefner, who is from NMH, is "thrilled" how the 1300+ acre land deal transpired.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:50 PM.

Submitted by Robin Conley

Robin Conley
John Blythe
J. L. Waggoner