

Minutes of a meeting of the Calais Trails Committee, held on Saturday, January 7, 2017, 10 AM, at the Calais Town Office

Members present: Reed Cherington, chair; Charlotte Hanna Bassage, recorder; Randy Allen; Tom Blachly; Michael Fullerton; Toni Kaeding; Denise Wilder; Bill Russell.

Also welcomed: Larry Bush; Fletcher Dean; Greg Western, Executive Director of the Cross Vermont Trail Association.

Reed called the meeting to order at 10:06 am.

Toni moved, Tom seconded, approval of the minutes of May 21, 2016; unanimously approved.

The committee discussed the Trails Committee Report, to appear in the Town Report. Michael moved, Tom seconded approval of the report; unanimously approved.

Greg Western from the Cross Vermont Trail Association described the trail and areas of emphasis: the Winooski Valley and the Wells River valley. The group helps other organizations with volunteers, grant writing, and other forms of support, as well as working on portions of the Cross VT trail itself. (He noted that Calais has the largest trails committee of any town he's yet seen.) He explained the history of the trail and the efforts to achieve eligibility for federal transportation funding. The Association is looking for \$250,000, with \$95,000 to go, to match Federal grant money to build additional handicapped accessible trail and a bridge. Greg explained the one-time request to the town of Calais as supporting a connector from the Montpelier trail system and the U-32 property into The Cross VT Trail to Groton and beyond. The project includes an approved 200 ft. bridge across the Winooski River. He handed out a map for clear reference.

Committee members signed the petition to put the \$1,607 request on the warning for town meeting. Charlotte moved, Toni seconded a motion of support for the Cross Vermont Trail Association's request; unanimously approved. The committee asked Reed and Kim McKee, who lives in Calais and serves on the CTVA board, to speak at town meeting on behalf of the warned agenda item requesting \$1.00 from each resident.

Charlotte moved, Denise seconded a motion to contribute \$100 from the Trails Committee (privately donated) funds to the Cross Vermont Trail Association; unanimously approved.

The web site is www.crossvermont.org.

The committee discussed a draft of a letter of support for a Town-sponsored "Better Connections" State grant application for East Calais Village. The purpose is to design traffic mitigating and pedestrian friendly efforts for the village of East Calais. Charlotte moved, Tom seconded approval of the letter of support; unanimously approved.

The committee discussed a trail between Maple Corner and the Bliss Pond Town Forest. Reed handed out a map showing the alignment of such a trail with an existing VAST trail. The idea is to formalize the use of the trail instead of having people cross the Morse's fields. Larry Bush noted that mountain bikers currently volunteer informally to maintain the trails within the Town Forest, and usually have a work day in the spring. Reed and Tom will pursue this trail proposal this coming spring, in consultation with the affected landowners and the Conservation Commission, and return to the committee with a recommendation. Larry noted that several wet spots would need addressing.

The committee discussed a possible East Calais village falls trail, beginning at the grist mill in the village, following the Kingsbury Branch, and passing the foundations of several old mill sites. This trail would take people to the bottom of the falls where there is a great view. Fletcher has offered to contact Cyrus Parker from the Dwinell Homestead Association, whose land would be traversed by this trail. The Dwinells are naturally concerned about safety, trash, and other forms of abuse. Charlotte offered to talk with John Risse who owns a parcel south of (downstream from) his grist mill, including some of the old mill sites. Charlotte and Fletcher will contact those landowners to say the committee is interested in developing trails and we would like to develop proposals to bring to them.

The committee also speculated about the idea of another East Calais trail that might at some point connect with Max Gray Road, Marshfield and their trails including those in the Stranahan forest. Michael and Denise will work on this to bring from idea to something more concrete.

Charlotte described the efforts underway to permanently conserve the Armstrong farm on Pekin Brook Road. The VT Land Trust has secured several sources of funding for the project which includes ensuring access for Calais residents to the brook for fishing or other recreation.

Toni said that the Ellis Bruce trail is very well used, and the town of Worcester has made and maintained a pullout area for cars, so as not to interfere with the town vehicles including the snowplow.

Denise, Michael and Toni are filling terms that expire this year. Reed will ask the selectboard to reappoint them after Town Meeting.

Tom moved, Toni seconded a motion to adjourn; unanimously approved at 11:51 am.