

Calais Conservation Commission Minutes

8/3/2022 - Calais town hall

Present: Larry Bush, Mark Brown, Julie Hand, Stephanie Kaplan, Neal Maker, Tracy Sudhalter

Guests: Scott Bassage (recorder), Reed Cherington, Charlotte Hanna, Kristin Schultz, Josh Schultz, Jill Schultz.

Proceedings:

- Meeting called to order at 7:10 pm.

- Additions:
 - None.

- The commission approved the minutes of March 22, May 18, May 31.

- Town forest survey - Paul Hannan
 - Paul Hannan presented the work in progress of his survey of the Bliss Pond Town Forest. He has made substantial progress, but a fair amount remains to be done.

- Town Highway #7 potential discontinuance
 - Stephanie noted that in her cover letter to the Selectboard attaching the CC's letter opposing the discontinuance she had added that after learning more about the issue, the Commission may revise its position.
 - Josh Schultz explained why his family wants the road discontinued.
 - Stephanie reminded the Commission that the Selectboard - not the Commission - has to decide whether TH #7 should be discontinued and suggested that the legal question of how long the town road is and whether it ends on the Shultzes' property or extends further may have to be resolved by a court.
 - Stephanie told the commission that Eric Sorenson had said in the context of the ancient roads issue that any new or upgraded roads in a forest block can create habitat fragmentation and the Town already has a lot of public roads.
 - Larry said that if we had known the road did not extend past the Schultz's property line we would not have recommended what we recommended
 - Julie said that if there are children playing in the road it should be discontinued.
 - Neal said that the road is a town asset and it does not matter whether it extends past the property line and that we should be careful of setting a precedent.
 - Mark said that roads are our Town Square, but we should withdraw the letter because we do not have consensus among the commission.
 - Larry moved and Julie seconded that we tell the Selectboard that at this meeting we voted to withdraw the letter we had previously sent.

- Curb cut ordinance:
 - Stephanie has heard from the Town Lawyer that the town can add environmental considerations to the Curb Cut Ordinance.

◦ Stephanie has heard from the Chair of the Selectboard that the Conservation Commission can propose text about environmental considerations to be added to the curb cut ordinance to the board for their consideration as they work on revising the ordinance. The Commission discussed possible additions to the ordinance and agreed that there should be some limitations on constructing on steep slopes close to water bodies. There will be further discussion at the next meeting.

- Fall Foliage walk:

- Larry suggested that the Fall Foliage Walk should be on the Ellis Bruce Trail.
- Larry handed out a flyer about the trail.(Attached) There was consensus that this would be a good idea for the Fall Foliage Walk

- The meeting adjourned at 9:15 pm.
- The next meeting will be Wednesday September 7th.

Items on the agenda but not addressed:

- Town office and town hall landscaping
- Work plan
- Other business
- Public comment

Ellis Bruce Trail

A Trail with a History

Ellis-Bruce trail began as Calais Town Highway #43 connecting Calais to Worcester. It appears on the 1858 H.E. Walling survey map, including 4 homes. A 1945 VT Highway map shows two homes and a camp remaining. Two cellar holes, an apple orchard, and remnants of homesteads, including old stone walls defining pastures and outbuildings, still exist on the trail. When no longer used as a road, it remained active as a hiking path.

In 2009, the Calais Trails Committee undertook improvement and some practical rerouting of the trail by securing a grant from Vermont Department of Forest, Parks and Recreation. Work was completed by the Youth Conservation Corp and volunteers in 2009. While much of the trail is wooded, it opens onto a meadow with unspoiled panoramic views of the Worcester Range. The trail is enjoyed frequently in all seasons for hiking, jogging, biking, snowshoeing, skiing and horseback riding and photography.

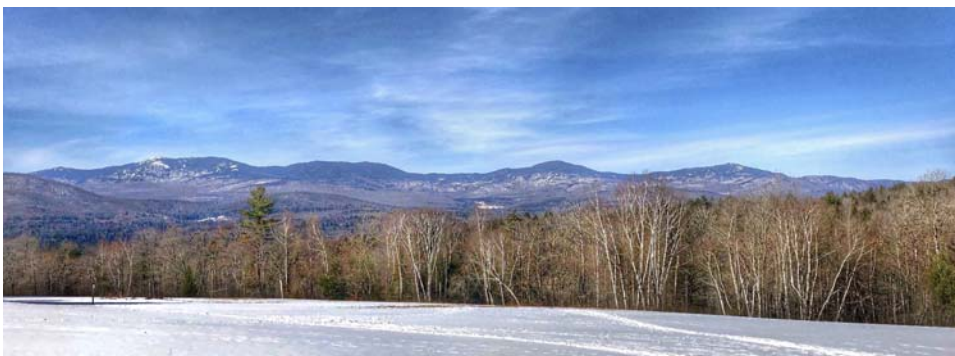


Photos: Toni Kaeding

"The first time I encountered a full parking lot at the Ellis Brook Trail off Kaeding Road in Worcester, I admit to having been sorely disappointed. It had always felt like my own little secret place. But, yes, natural beauty is meant to be shared, and to be preserved. RE

"I walk this trail at least once a week throughout the year. One of the highlights on the well earned trip back down is emerging into the meadow that gives a full view of the Worcester range, the peaks we know well, the lesser known ridges and folds of the entire range. From here I can watch the sunset, and track the movement of the sun from spring to fall and back again." EB

"It was a sunny June day and the meadow was full of dandelions. The expansive north-south view of the Worcester Range and the river valley below was lovely beyond anything I had ever known. I thought it must be the most beautiful place on earth. Forty years later, this view still takes my breath away." CW



"You can't re-create something like this. If you let it be developed, then it's gone, and you never get it back,"

U.S. Sen. Patrick Leahy
Hunger Headwaters Project 2018

A Walk Through History on the Ellis-Bruce Trail

Right away I know there is something different about this Trail. I am standing on old Calais Town Highway #43 where it enters the woods at the top of Long Meadow Road in Calais. As I look down the Trail, now worn by years of use, I can feel the pull of time. Off to the right is the farm where, June (Bruce) Richardson, as a girl, spent summers and weekends. June still lives nearby, and the apple trees on the farm still grow. I start down the Trail and before long I come upon another Bruce homestead, this one long abandoned but the cellar hole remains squarely intact with not a stone out of place, including the front and back door step. The old foundation waits patiently for the family that will never come home. They rest behind the house, over a gully washout, and under an enormous old maple in the Bruce family cemetery. Several young people lie there, including Louisa Bruce, wife of Oscar Oakes, who died in 1816 at age twenty-two.

Presently the Trail veers left off the old road to avoid a washout, but continues west, still paralleling the road...but now peering through the back doors of the people who once lived there.

We continue on and BarneyTheDog and I stop to rest at the half-way point to Worcester. There is a stone bridge here that spans a run-off stream which flows into “No-Name” brook. I know that people pan for gold in this brook – bringing their sons along as their grandfathers brought them – but there are none here today.

The next part of the Trail is quite flat and before long we see the crumbling stone walls of another homestead. The Ellis family settled here and their cellar hole looks out upon an overgrown old orchard where the deer like to visit. Their house was destroyed by fire but when the Ellis boys returned home from the Civil War, they rebuilt on a different site where part of the old house still stands on Kaeding Road. I live in that house and hope to end my days there. There is a good story about the Ellis daughter falling in love with one of the Gould boys from Montpelier. They marry but the daughter didn't want to move away, so they settled nearby, giving name to the “other” Gould Road – this one in Worcester. I heard these stories and many more from Edward Gould and his father Ernest whom I met in Montpelier in the 1970's.

The final stretch of the Trail drifts easily downhill through a hemlock forest and opens into a meadow with a magnificent panorama of the Worcester Mountain Range that is unsullied by time or man. As I complete my walk through history on the Ellis-Bruce Trail, I'm happy to know that year after year, the meadow still makes hay, that school children still picnic in the field, that people still get married there, and pan for gold. That young people still skinny dip in the stream, and that the wonderful vista I see before me is exactly the same vista Vermonters saw 200 years ago.

Toni Kaeding
Worcester, VT
April 2022