

Concord Conservation Commission Trails Subcommittee Meeting
January 10, 2024
City Hall, 2nd Floor Conference Room, 41 Green Street

Members Present: Fran Philippe (Acting chair), Gail Page, Mark Cheever, Rebecca Ross, Rik Van Riel (alternate)

Members Absent: Aaron Monier (Secretary), Jeff Lewis (Conservation Commission liaison)

Staff Present: Ron Klemarczyk (Consultant City Forester), Carl Matson (Trail Ranger), AnneMarie Skinner (Assistant City Planner)

Guests: Wayne Morrill, Doug Richardson

1. Called to order by Fran Philippe at 5:00 PM.
2. Proposed Trail: Around pond at Steeplegate Mall.
 - a. Wayne Morrill and Doug Richardson presented a concept plan for a proposed trail that was previously presented to the Conservation Commission. The pond is owned by the city. Mr. Morrill described the proposed project as a mixed-use project and the developer would like to create a walking trail around the wetland that will connect to the development and Loudon Road. Mr. Morrill noted there will be no impact to the wetland buffer. There are a lot of homeless camps in the area that would be relocated. The water body is a detention area for Loudon Road, including Steeplegate Mall.
 - b. Fran Philippe wondered about a timeframe for the project. Doug Richardson responded that it's a function of permitting. The goal is to finish permitting by late spring of 2024 and commence demolition, complete the uses in the western portion of the site by the summer of 2025, and break ground in the spring of 2025 on the eastern portions. Mr. Richardson noted that it takes about 18 months to build an apartment building. The pump station is anticipated to be operation in August 2026.
 - c. Ron Klemarczyk introduced himself and asked about stormwater runoff. Mr. Morrill responded that it's discharged to a level spreader and the trail would come around the discharge area.

- d. Mr. Klemarczyk additionally commented that one trail system had to be closed because of the homeless, so that would be an issue that would need to be addressed. Mr. Klemarczyk further noted that litter has been minimal since the mall is closed, but with the apartments, dumpsters, and cars, when discharge goes into the spreader, does it catch the litter and debris? Mr. Morrill responded by stating that the spreader has not been maintained in a long time, so it will be cleaned and maintained as part of the development. Mr. Richardson stated that there will be an internal trash system, with no dumpsters outside.
- e. Mr. Klemarczyk said that new trails require a wildlife impact study. He noted that there have been beavers in the past and trails and wildlife are not a good match, although it's a lot of open space for the new residents in the area. Biologists would need to review the area. Mr. Morrill responded by stating the Heritage Bureau noted nothing of significance.
- f. Mr. Klemarczyk asked about reducing impervious surface. Mr. Morrill stated that the overall impervious surface meets the open space criteria of under 85%, whereas right now the impervious surface is 94% of the site. Mr. Morrill noted that the development will add green space wherever possible.
- g. Mark Cheever wondered about the health of the water of the pond and implications for public health. Mr. Klemarczyk said that anything over five acres is designated as a city forest and that there has been no management of this wetland/pond property at all as part of the city.
- h. Rebecca Ross wondered about the long-term management plan for supporting and maintaining the trail, as well as accessibility and inclusivity. Mr. Morrill responded that an accessible trail would likely require an impervious surface within the 50-foot wetland buffer, but they also haven't specifically looked at the trail from that perspective. He is not sure about the topography in the area. Mr. Richardson said they are achieving accessibility by creating the small park with a portion of the trail getting the people to the waterfront and the small park, but that an accessible trail going around the entire pond would be more problematic. He noted that units and parking for accessibility will be provided as per code requirements.

- i. Ms. Philippe wondered who would develop the trail. Mr. Richardson said they would be requesting permission from the city for the developer to develop and maintain the trail, not the city.
 - j. Rik van Riel commented that the trail would allow people to get groceries by walking. Mr. Morrill confirmed that the trail would give anyone living in the development pedestrian access to Walmart.
 - k. Mr. Cheever noted that the term used in the trails master plan is “all persons” trails and they are generally permeable and graded. Mr. Cheever feels that would present a lot of value to the area and the developers should think thoughtfully about whether this is a good fit.
 - l. Mr. Cheever also wondered about the maintenance in perpetuity. Mr. Richardson said that perpetuity is a long time, but they will work with the city for an agreement of at least 25 years of maintenance for upkeep, trash removal, etc.
 - m. AnneMarie Skinner asked about policing for homeless. Both Mr. Morrill and Mr. Richardson noted that their maintenance people would work with the city to resolve those issues and access would be limited until the project is complete.
 - n. Ms. Philippe reminded the group that there is a procedure and process for a new trail and the subcommittee will utilize that procedure and process for this proposed trail.
 - o. Ms. Ross asked for more project details before proceeding with the criteria checklist. Mr. Richardson said they would provide additional information, surveys, tree surveys, etc.
 - p. Mr. Klemarczyk noted that the city has asked for a reconnaissance from him in the past.
 - q. Rebecca Ross moved to have Ron Klemarczyk do a reconnaissance of the site once the developer has submitted an official concept proposed. Mark Cheever seconded. Motion passed unanimously.
3. Proposed Trail: Northerly bypass Woodard property
- a. AnneMarie Skinner explained that a northerly bypass to go around the Woodard property at the end of the discontinued District 5 road is required as part of the settlement agreement with the Woodards.
 - b. Rebecca Ross stated that this bypass would bypass the frontage on the Woodard property, which is about 230 feet. The bypass is to ensure that users are not in the front yard of the Woodard property.

- c. Ron Klemarczyk noted that the Matsons originally owned the property. There have been problems with hikers and bicyclists. He is looking at doing a timber sale in Stand 3. He emphasized that it's very wet along the Woodards property and that the portion on the west is extremely steep and eroded. He doesn't want the bypass to impact any private property.
 - d. Ms. Ross said that the new signage is well-placed, that it was never a Class 6 road but the Hopkinton side is a Class 6 road. She noted that the Woodards are her parents.
 - e. General discussion ensued about the location of the bypass, wetland issues, the steep gully, and no connection to the west.
 - f. AnneMarie Skinner recommended having Mr. Klemarczyk do a reconnaissance. Mr. Klemarczyk recommended involving Ms. Ross, but not as a subcommittee member. Mr. Cheever said a site visit might be the next best step.
 - g. Mark Cheever made a motion to schedule a site visit with Ron Klemarczyk, AnneMarie Skinner, and Rik van Riel, including Rebecca Ross as a private property owner. Rik van Riel seconded. Motion passed unanimously.
4. Report from Ron Klemarczyk:
- a. Mr. Klemarczyk briefly reviewed the report contained in the agenda packet.
 - b. Ms. Philippe and Ms. Page noted trees down on the south side of the Riley Trail. Mr. Klemarczyk said he would address. Ms. Ross wondered when that site was last logged. Mr. Klemarczyk said it was in 1993 by Bill Crowley.
 - c. Mr. Cheever asked about removing dead standing trees around the trails. He said that it would be very expensive to cut down all the dead trees and there is potential for missing one, which if it then falls and hurts someone, that creates a liability. Mr. Klemarczyk said there is no official policy, but generally trees are only removed as they come down and/or if there is notice of a hazard.
5. Report from Carl Matson:
- a. Carl briefly summarized his report contained in the agenda packet. He noted that there is a problem with dumping at the Knowell Trail,

but that he is cleaning up whatever is dumped. He explained that he has moved a camera and signage to that area, which seems to have helped.

- b. Mr. Matson explained that the other problematic site is the Oak Hill parking lot. He relocated the camera signs from Morono Park but there is no camera there.
- c. He is keeping an eye on Healy Park and the homeless.
- d. He is also keeping up on culverts and water bars.
- e. Rebecca Ross noted that leaf blowing of the trails is being posted on social media and that leaf blowing of the trails leads to trail erosion and the leaves need to be left alone. Discussion ensued about posting a positive message on the social media sites to refrain from leaf blowing the trails.
- f. Mr. Matson concluded by stating that everything looks pretty good on the trails.

6. Election of officers:

- a. Moved by Rebecca Ross, seconded by Gail Page, to elect Fran Philippe as Chair, Mark Cheever as Vice-chair, and Aaron Monier as secretary. Motion passed unanimously.

7. Membership:

- a. Rik van Riel said he is willing to move from being an alternate member to a regular member. Fran Philippe encouraged everyone to get the word out that more members are needed. Mark Cheever noted that the Trail Subcommittee organization strives to have “appointed members from different geographic areas of the city and representative of different groups of trail users.” Mr. Cheever volunteered to look at the geographic and trail user diversity of the group.

8. Guided Hikes – Fran Philippe said that the last group hike was successful. No one had availability for a hike in January.

9. Remaining agenda items will be discussed at the February meeting, including approving the minutes from the November 2023 meeting. (The minutes were not able to be approved because there wasn’t a quorum.

Rebecca Ross and Mark Cheever were both unable to vote on the minutes because they were not in attendance at the November 2023 meeting.)

10. Mark Cheever moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Rebecca Ross. Motion passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 6:32 PM.