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Town of Vernon
Hockanum River Linear Park Committee

Minutes – January 24, 2020

Present: Members: George Arthur, Joe King, Ann Letendre; Ginny Gingras arriving 10:15 am
Guest: Don Bellingham, Vernon Greenway Volunteers;
Staff Advisor: P&R Director, Marty Sitler

HRLP Committee meeting called to order at 9:40 am by Chairman Ann Letendre.

1. Approval of Minutes

Minutes of previous meeting of November 15, 2019 were approved, motion by Joe, second by George. Trail reports from Arthur and Vernon Greenway Volunteers were attached to minutes.

2. Old Business

A. Hockanum River Trail Reports
Refer to Arthur report and Vernon Greenway Volunteers report (attached) for details.

B. Review of trail needs
- Pauls Pizza parking area – Still need to install a "Do not block entrance" sign at trail access so that trail walkers as well as vehicles can enter if needed. No other needs noted.

C. Current Projects – Status, Update
1 - Friends HRLP Recreational Trails Grant – Suspended Bridge & Pleasantview Marsh Boardwalk:

a. Ann reported that ORC, LLC completed an additional 200 feet of boardwalk at Pleasantview Marsh, but another 12 feet still needs to be added to get beyond a muddy section. ORC will do in the coming weeks, weather permitting. P&R staff installed the interpretive sign, cleaned up the parking area, and, with George Arthur, moved unused section of "bleacher boardwalk" to two other muddy areas on the trail. Ribbon cutting will be scheduled in spring for this new park area. Remaining funds in the $189,000 grant are $11,872. These funds are earmarked for remaining signage at both the bridge site and at P'view parking area; for trail construction of the new P'view to Manchester trail; and for legal fees that may be required for easements for P'view to Manchester trail. Easements will be required from these owners: Subway (use of bridge to get across the Tank river at Golfland); Tri-City owners and Circle Associates; use of parking lot at the former Free Spirit; possibly parking space at Starbucks.

b. George reported that he color coded the maps to correspond with the trail blazes on the planned Pleasantview – Manchester trail. He reviewed costs of structures that will be needed. Ann noted that there are not sufficient funds to cover all of the structures, and will require prioritization, and other sources of funds/grants could be pursued if needed rather than request another extension/funding from the DEEP grant.

c. Discussion followed on the trail connections to the new Pleasantview Marsh boardwalk trail. The trail connects on the north at Trail Run development. Ann reiterated that the P&Z Commission had stipulated requirements for amenities to the Hockanum River Linear Park in their March 2016 approval of the Trail Run Development. To refresh memories, Ann will email the P&Z approval letter to the HRLP Committee. The stipulated amenities are:

(1) An approximately 8 to 9-acre conservation easement along the eastern side of the Hockanum River (easement description subject to approval of the HRLP Committee);
(2) Pedestrian/vehicular access easements to the HRLP trail along the river;
(3) Nine parking spaces to be reserved for HRLP trail users;
(4) Construction of an 8-ft wide stonedust and gravel path along the river.

Ann reported that the conservation easement for the land along the river has been recorded, but we need to follow up on easement language, etc. Also that the HRLP Committee had committed to work with the Trail Run developer to define location of the stonedust trail along the river and obtain whatever wetlands permitting would be needed. The development is still in progress. Ann noted that we should make contact with the developer to confirm a timeline and the trail stipulations, and will follow up with Planning Dept.

2 – Trail Census Project

Don reported that he is waiting for an update for the latest figures. He also said that they have moved the laser sensor near Church Street to capture the walkers coming from the Rockville spur. That has increased the numbers significantly.

D. Potential Future HRLP Projects, New grants: No action

E. River Protection: No action

F. Other Hockanum River Projects:

- Former Marianist Fathers Property – R. Hamid – no new discussions
- 19 Grove St – no new discussions

3. New Business –

A. Dog Park at Saxony Mill Park – Review of Revised Plans

Marty Sitler distributed the revised plan and discussed the changes, which involved mostly increasing the distances between the dog fencing and the foundation wall and between the sidewalk and the fencing by a few feet. Ann reported that, as requested by the HRLP Committee, she had reiterated the HRLP Committee's comments on the dog park plan to the Council at their Jan 21 meeting. She said she had also discussed the need for improvements to the sitting area, and their estimated costs ($3300), and had asked that the funds be included in the allotment for the dog park. She had also stated that the sitting area would see increased public use and it made sense to have it looking groomed and welcoming, as an enhancement to the dog park. No decision was made by Council. Ann will email Marty the estimates, Marty will review his budget to see what can be accommodated.

B. Report – Ct Trails Symposium (Oct 24, 2019); possibilities for action

Ann reported that she had attended the morning session of this all day informative symposium. She especially noted that, while Vernon was one of the first towns in the State to establish rail and other trails, other towns are catching up. She also noted that other towns are doing a lot with trail-finder apps, and that we should get involved in this also. She said at a minimum we should "register" our trails with the CT Office of Tourism, and we should have a link on their website. The Director, Randy Fiveash was a speaker at the symposium and noted that over 25% of their requests for information are regarding CT trails.

4. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 11:20 am, motion by Joe, second by George, motion approved.

Respectively submitted,

Ann Letendre, Chairman

Vernon Greenways Volunteers Report – Don Bellingham

November 13, 2019 to January 24, 2020

Annual Trail and Project Sponsor Renewal Letters

Sent our 19 Trail and Project Sponsor Renewal letters on January 5. One discontinued participation.

Submitted VGV Web Page Updates

Submitted VGV Web Page (https://vernongreenways.org) updates to Jon Roe on January 15. He completed updates on January 20. Included was the addition of a new ATV and storage shed at the Birch Street Fire Station to house it to replace the old mule we had been using. Both provided by Parks and Rec. Also, mentioned we did a search of trees adjacent to the Rail Trail in September to see if there had been any insect damage. None were found.

Email to VGV members aksing for a Donation

For the first time on January 15th after removing members who are already Sponsors from my 105 member email list I asked if anyone would like to submit a tax deductible donation. I explained that we were totally self funded and what we bought with donations.

On-line Trail and Project Sponsor Data Updated

Submitted Trail and Project Sponsor changes to Bruce Luddy to update on-line info on January 17 he completed on January 19.

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Trail Maintenance Report – George Arthur

November 15, 2019 to January 24, 2020

I worked 36 hrs this period on HRLP business.
I helped P&R maintainers move two sections of metal boardwalks from the area by the Lyman bridge to a nearby muddy area just to the north. We also took scrap pieces to the transfer station.

A report for P&R regarding the 99 trail structures that I have worked on was prepared. The report contains 12 trail maps that show the location of each of the structures. A 4 page data table was included to provide details for each structure.

The GIS trail maps were updated for the HRLP trail from Pleasantview to Manchester. The color of the trail blazes was included.

(I also worked 7 hrs at Valley Falls Park to help P&R maintainers add additional PT lumber to the 50 foot boardwalk. All of the existing 100 deck boards were screwed to the new lumber to prevent the deck boards from loosening up.)