

**Town of Vernon
Hockanum River Linear Park Committee
Special Meeting
Minutes – November 15th, 2019**

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20 JAN 29 AM 8:27

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

(HRLP meeting called to order at 9:05 am by Chairman Ann Letendre. Note: meeting time was re-scheduled to start at 9:00 am, ½ hour earlier than the regular meeting start time of 9:30 am, so meeting is termed a “special meeting”, per FOI requirements.)

1. Approval of Minutes

Minutes of previous meetings of July 26 and October 4th, 2019 were approved, motion by Joe, second by George. Motion to address C. New Business item first since Marty had to leave at 9:45 am. Motion by Joe, second by George, approved.

2. Old Business

- A. Hockanum River Trail Reports
Refer to Arthur report and Vernon Greenway Volunteers report (attached) for details.
- B. Review of needs
 - Review of trail needs:
 1. George reported that the brush at Corner Park, Paper Mill Pond was removed by Parks & Rec.
 2. 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.
- C. Current Projects – Status, Update
 - Friends HRLP Rec Trail Grant: Ann reported that ORC, LLC will begin the addition to the boardwalk next week.
 - George reviewed structures needed on the new trail section from P’view to Manchester Town Line.
- D. Potential Future HRLP Projects, New grants: No action
- E. River Protection: No action
- F. Other Hockanum River Projects:
 - Marianist Fathers Property – R. Hamid – no new discussions
 - 19 Grove St – no new discussions

3. New Business – Dog Park at Saxony Mill Park – Review of Plans

Marty Sitler asked for HRLP Committee input to the dog park plans. He distributed the site plan drafted by Bob Hurd. Discussion followed. These concerns/points were raised by the Committee:

- (a) Saxony Mill Park is intended to be a quiet urban neighborhood park, a place of respite, accessed mostly by local foot traffic. It is one of four such sitting parks identified in the HRLP Master Plan for Rockville. Some fishing is done at this site. The Committee felt that a dog park would be visually intrusive as well noisy, and would conflict with the intended purpose of Saxony Mill Park.
- (b) The site is a National Historic Register site, and should be respected for that designation. Ann noted that when the HRLP Committee was developing the park site in 2004, the Committee had to send the site plan for the park to the State Historian to obtain permission for Saxony Mill Park development. Since the location of the park area was not near the old mill foundation, we were given approval.
- (c) Ann noted that an inland wetlands permit needs to be obtained for any material deposited within 200 feet of the Hockanum River, per Inland Wetlands Regulations. That would cover about half the site.
- (d) Joe and Don noted that there is a school bus stop at the site on West St; safety for walking school children was a concern, especially for their natural bent to want to “visit” with the dogs.
- (e) George noted that, since the trail to the large sycamore was not used that often, the Committee had decided to just let brush grow up around it to keep the public a safe distance from the tree. The existing brush should be left as is, and should not be disturbed.

- (f) The Committee recognized that there is a need for a dog park in town, and that the most popular dog walking site, Valley Falls Park, was overused for that purpose. Whether this park would relieve some of that use is questionable, since it is a different type of park, off-leash, and social play area.
- (g) Ann had concerns about the process that led to the decision to construct the park. Over the course of a year, a group of citizens held several meetings to find a site. Two or three members of the Town Council attended the meetings. The meetings were not noticed, nor were minutes taken and filed – even though decisions were being made about a project on Town property, using Town funding, and attended by two or more Town Councilmen. No public hearings had been noticed or held. The HRLP Committee had not been asked to provide input, other than an email Ann received July, 2018 from Brian Motola about use of this park as a possible dog park site. Ann responded with concern about conflicting use. There was no further communication and Ann said she had assumed the group looked for a site elsewhere.
- (h) Don and Ginny were concerned about keeping the site clean. Marty commented that it had been proposed that a Friends group would be formed to oversee maintenance. Don noted that the group would have to be very active, and that a detail plan laying out specific responsibilities and frequency of cleanup would be critical, as he has learned from his leadership role with the Vernon Greenway Volunteers.
- (i) Possible solutions to alleviate the conflicting use problem: George and Ann suggested that a row of bushes along the top of the foundation wall would separate the dog park facilities from the quiet park area. Improvements could also be made to the existing riverside sitting area, redoing existing landscape, and replacing the sign that has been apparently stolen.

Marty expects to present the plan to the Town Council Tuesday the 15th. Comments of the HRLP Committee could be submitted at Citizens Forum, unless invited to speak during Council discussion. Ann will summarize comments and send to Marty, as well as request funds for barrier bushes, improvements to the sitting park area along the river, and replacement of the park sign.

Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 11:05 am, motion by Joe, second by George, motion approved.

Respectively submitted,

Ann Letendre, Chairman

Vernon Greenways Volunteers Report – Don Bellingham
October 5, 2019 to November 12, 2019

End of Year Appreciation Dinner

The End Of year Appreciation Dinner to celebrate the completion of our 15th year was held at Camp Newhoca on November 7, 2019. It was attended by 25. Mayor Champagne spoke as did Parks and Rec Director Martin Sitler. I gave a 15 minute power point presentation on what happened in 2019. John Horan received the ABCD(Above and beyond the Call of Duty) Award and was added to our Wall of Honor. A catered dinner that featured chicken and pasta was served.

Trail Maintenance Report – George Arthur
September 27 to November 15, 2019

I worked 62 hours during this period, some as an employee and some as a volunteer.

1. The fence stile on the north side of the DOT dam was moved to the position that was agreed upon during the HRLP committee walks.
2. The trail ladder was built on the Wendy steep slope by the detention pond. The path can serve as an HRLP access trail from the business parking.
3. The trails were refreshed and blazed from the Wendy north boundary to the north boundary of the Manchester former Golfland. They were walked by the committee.
4. The trail maps are being updated. Wendy's has an orange blazed trail as close to the river as possible and still usually dry. There is also a second orange/blue blazed trail on higher elevations. There is the connector trail blazed orange/red. There is one Circle-Associate's trail blazed orange along the river. There is are two trails on the Giulietti property. The main trail is blazed orange and there is a river trail blazed orange/blue. The Tri-City property and the DOT property trails are blazed orange.

5. I removed a section of the riverside boardwalk by the Mansion property bridge that was no longer needed. It had four steel bleacher seats for the deck that will be used to build a needed boardwalk on the Wendy property.
6. Two more metal sections may be reused on the Pleasantview portion.
7. I continue to update the information about trail structures with GIS maps and data tables. I plan to issue a report to P&R and VGV that might be helpful for future trail maintenance.