

DRAFT

Town of Vernon

Hockanum River Linear Park Committee

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Minutes – October 2, 2009

09 OCT -8 AM 10: 35

Present: Members: Ginny Gingras, Don Bellingham, George Arthur, Joe King, Ann Letendre;
Advisor: Bruce Dinnie Guest: Sonoko Fagans, Chris Appruzeze

The meeting was held at the Lottie Fisk Building, South St. and was called to order at 9:40 am by Ann Letendre, chairperson.

Approval of Minutes

Minutes of March 27, 2009 were approved as drafted. Motion by Arthur, second by King.

Old Business

- A. **Dart Hill North Park and Trails**– (Don Bellingham, Trail Manager) – Benches with graffiti were removed. See Don't report for further into.
- B. **Rockville Parks**
 - Paper Mill Park** – no new activity
 - Saxony Park** – The garden soil needs to be removed and the plants have to be replanted. Dennis at Garden Barn had set aside the plants over a year ago – we have already paid for them. The historic sign has been installed.
- C. **Dart Hill South Park and Trails** – Discussion again that the playscape needs to be replaced. Bruce noted that it would cost on the order of \$40,000. Ann will talk to Claire Janowski about a funds source. The trails are generally in good shape. George reported that a walk had been scheduled with Malcolm and Susan Barlow of Manchester, two trail experts, on the Dart Hill trails and they both found the trails to be very nice and in great shape. George will talk to Cliff Chapman about the piece of land owned by Cliff near the high tension wires that still does not have a trail.
- D. **Vernon Greenways Volunteers Report** – (See D. Bellingham report). Of particular note, the no smoking policy appears to be successful. Don has noted quite a reduction in the number of cigarette butts at VF Park and at the Dart Hill sites. Ginny noted an increase in the dog poop at Valley Falls. We need to focus on finding a location for a dog park. We will set a date to go visit one with Bruce.
- E. **HRLP Plan** – As noted last meeting, George and Aaron Nash updated the plan. We need to follow up and see if it can be put on the Town website. Ann will ask Aaron for copies for the Committee. George and Ann met with Town Planner Len Tundermann to discuss the HRLP Plan and give him a copy of the updated Plan, which should be incorporated into the POCD.
- F. **Hockanum River Watershed Activities** – (See G. Arthur report)
- G. **Watershed Studies** – Ann reported that the Tankerhoosen Watershed Management Plan project has been completed, and that a Stakeholders' Agreement is being obtained from the four towns within the watershed. The North Central Conservation District submitted a 319 grant application for one of the projects recommended in the Plan.
- H. **Grant Status – Lyman Grant.** Ann reported that the project had been completed. Signs have been installed, all work is complete. All bills were submitted to DEP and reimbursement has been received. We will hold a grand opening in the Spring, possibly a cookout. Chris A. from the Am. Eagle Credit Union will try to work co-sponsorship of the event.
Vernon Marsh – Ann will contact Laurie Giannotti again. Grant paperwork is missing.
- I. **Talcottville Mill Clearing – nothing new**

J. Downtown Rockville Historic Trail – We need to set a time to walk West Main St to plan it out.

New Business:

A. RBV – 2009 Ann reviewed time, tasks that need doing for the macroinvertebrate bioassessments in the Tankerhoosen scheduled for Oct 10th at the TAC building. Joe will bring refreshments. Jane Seymour will do the training presentation. The event is organized by the Friends of HRLP. Ann will obtain the kits from DEP. Don Bellingham did the PR for the newspapers. Sarah Smith will be able to come with students from RHS again. Ann said she received a couple of calls from MCC students also.

The meeting adjourned at 10:50 am, motion by King, second by Arthur.

Respectfully submitted, Ann Letendre, Chairperson

October 2, 2009 Hockanum River Linear Park Committee Meeting – Don Bellingham

Dart Hill North Park

- The two benches, back by where the boardwalk was installed, were removed due to multiple graffiti episodes.

Dart Hill South Park

- See Vernon Greenways Volunteers.

HRLP Trails

- See Vernon Greenways Volunteers

Vernon Greenways Volunteers

- Parks and Rec No Smoking Policy suggested by VGV became effective April 2009. Permanent signs were installed at each of the trail and ball park sites in town. Temporary signs to explain the rationale for the policy were placed at each of the trail sites for one week periods including: Dart Hill South, Church Street, Boulder Ridge Park, Walker's Reservoir, Valley Falls Park, Dart Hill North and VCMS. The cigarette litter at the main control site, Dart Hill South Parking Lot, went from an estimated 50-70 per week to a consistent count in the teens. An unexpected plus is that general litter was also reduced considerably.
- The Weed Wacker Group as outlined in the May 2009 meeting notes was disbanded in favor of a couple of younger Volunteers. The three hour sessions were found to be too aggressive for some of the original group. The new format is one three hour session weekly with Don and a Volunteer with daytime availability. A one and one-half hour weekly night time session was originally intended but that Volunteer withdrew after one session as he contacted a severe case of poison ivy.
- The four people Recycle Pick-Up Group from 2009 was disbanded in favor of an acquaintance of Bruce Dinnie who already was collecting recyclables in town. This has the advantage that those that require deposits will be removed from our recyclables as he takes those back for deposit (including water bottles that he returns to Maine). I will monitor the recycle bins to make sure the process continues properly.
- The Sign Connection has been selected as the vendor for the Braille Trail Signs. Ann, Ginny and Don e-mailed numerous times to discuss revised wording on the signs. Final drafts were submitted on September 23 for production. We expect a three to four week TAT.
- The Braille Trail Redo is continuing. May 30 – installed remaining deer netting. June 17 & 27 – Repair and add mulch to the Braille Trail. September 9 – Replant 14 native shrubs and weed original shrubs. September 10, 15 and 19 remove invasives.
- Work parties to weed the trail heads at Dart Hill North and Dart Hill South took place on July 8, July 14 and August 6.
- Public Works installed curbing and a catch basin on the Valley Falls entry road to eliminate erosion of the Braille Trail.

May 22, 2009 Hockanum River Linear Park Committee Meeting – Don Bellingham

Dart Hill North Park

- I asked Bruce to remove the two benches that were back by where the boardwalk was installed due to multiple graffiti episodes. Latest graffiti was offensive.

Dart Hill South Park

- See Vernon Greenways Volunteers.

HRLP Trails

- See Vernon Greenways Volunteers

Vernon Greenways Volunteers

- On April 1 and April 8 the Cigarette Litter Prevention Committee met with Bruce. Parks and Recreation No Smoking Policy will be effective May 2009. The program will be phased in starting with the trails and parks associated with the trails. A permanent sign will be installed at the entrance of each site and temporary signage explaining why this program is necessary will be floated from location to location. Vernon Greenways Volunteers will absorb the cost of all signage.
- Five members of the Weed Wacker Group attended a training class by George Arthur on April 9. On May 13 about ¼ acre site of Japanese knotweed was cleared in Dart Hill North in preparation for spraying by George. The Dart Hill South trail from Dart Hill Road to past Dart Hill South Park was done on May 18.
- The first monthly pickup for the four person Recycle Pick-Up Group for 2009 was done on April 25. The second is scheduled for May 23.
- The Spring Kickoff Meeting was held on April 27 and was attended by 20 people. Don discussed our plans for 2009, Rose Hiskes gave a presentation on invasive plants and Bruce Dinnie fielded questions from the audience.
- Ann, Ginny and Don met on April 30, May 5 and May 20 to discuss revised wording on the Braille signs at Valley Falls.
- The Braille Trail Redo is well underway. Including: April 2 – create 30 Braille posts to facilitate removing Braille ropes off of trees; April 18 – install new Braille posts and reroute trail; April 29 – put in erosion control to eliminate runoff from Valley Falls Road; May 9 – plant 104 native species on the 2 acre site; install deer netting around 45 of the plants and spray remaining plants with liquid fence. Another work party on May 30 will install remaining deer netting.
- First organized hike (Mansions at Hockanum Crossing) for the seven apartment/condominium complexes that are adjacent to the Hockanum River Linear Park was conducted on May 16 to encourage more use of the Hockanum River hiking trails. The hike was led by George Arthur and there were 11 total participants. We need to rethink the approach to attract more participants.

HRLP COMMITTEE 10/2/09 MEETING
WATERSHED/TRAIL REPORT – G. ARTHUR

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HRLP trails:

- Construction of the latest trail segment at Mansions LLC is completed. The developer, Cliff Chapman, has completed the stone dust trail and has installed two stone dust vistas with rustic stone walls built to also serve as seating benches. Two picnic tables with a concrete base were installed at the vistas. The vistas also have a metal sign that explains the history of the Lyman farm (former property owner) and the existing bridge across the river that connected the two farm parcels. Cliff also paved 200 feet of the existing stone dust trail on the Mansions I property which had been an erosion problem.

In that same area on Mansions I, Parks & Rec has created another vista that overlooks the remains of a dam and historic mill site. A wooden seating bench was constructed and a sign containing the mill history was installed. Two beautiful signs were also placed on each side of Hockanum Blvd where the stone dust trail and the river cross.

- The Vernon GIS map of the HRLP Master Plan has been revised to reflect both the changes made by the committee and the recent constructions at the Mansions LLC. The revised map may be viewed in the Parks & Rec office. Smaller versions are available upon request.
- All of the existing trails are in good shape and all blazes have been refreshed.
- Construction of the Rockville section of the HRLP trail along West Main St was started this summer utilizing the summer part time crews from Parks and Rec. Undergrowth was cleared from the properties and some dangerous trees were removed. Public Works cleared a mess of debris from the river at West Main park by Vernon Ave.
- Dangerous trees were removed and brush/weeds were cleared on the Rail Trail from Bolton to Manchester. Erosion problems were fixed on the trail near Bolton. Plans are underway to pave the trail immediately west of Phoenix St. Tree and brush work on the Rockville Spur Rail Trail has been completed from Warren Ave to Rt. 30.

Hikes:

- Hikes were conducted in August to introduce the scenic Hockanum River Trail to Susan and Malcolm Barlow. Susan, Malcolm, and George Arthur led around trip Walk CT family hike on August 29 from the WTP to Dart Hill North Park.
- Over 130 Connecticut events were conducted for National Trails Day on Saturday June 6 and Sunday June 7. George Arthur led a “trail constructions and conservation” hike on Saturday June 6 from Valley Falls Park around the pond, Braille Trail, and through Belding WMA. A Sunday June 7 hike was led by Connecticut Water Co on the new Shenipsit Trail segment along the abandoned trolley line at Shenipsit Lake.
- Four educational hikes were conducted in July and August for the Valley Falls Kids Camp by Jane Seymour and George Arthur.

HWA:

The Watershed did not meet in July, August, or September.

ELLINGTON: The committee invites the public to a ribbon cutting at the Windermere Ave. new bridge on Friday Oct. 2 at 1 PM. There will now be some additional parking at the west end of the bridge for hikers and kayakers.

EAST HARTFORD: There will be a river cleanup on Oct 3 as part of the Connecticut River Annual Cleanup.

MANCHESTER: Efforts continue to establish the Bigelow Brook Greenway. There will be a river cleanup on Oct 3 as part of the Connecticut River Annual Cleanup.

Respectfully submitted,

George Arthur