

Hamilton Open Space Committee
Minutes of Meeting of January 24, 2017
Memorial Room, Town Hall

Members Present: Anne Gero, Rosemary Kennedy, Zachary Peters

Others Present: Dave Rimmer, Director of Stewardship, Greenbelt; Susan Lawrence, Board Chair, ECTA; George Tarr, Conservation Commission; Richard Boroff

Ms. Gero opened the meeting at 7:05pm.

Patton Homestead Open Space

The meeting began with introductions. Dave Rimmer then reviewed a plan showing the location of the Patton Homestead in relation to parcels that Greenbelt owns in fee or over which it holds a conservation restriction. He also noted that Greenbelt constructed the viewing platform and was reimbursed by the Town. (The viewing platform itself is on Greenbelt owned land.) A brief discussion followed re: future trail connection possibilities.

Ms. Gero then reviewed a site plan of the Homestead property on which the Open Space Committee located the parking lot that the Town is proposing to construct for users of the Homestead buildings, as well as possible locations for open space/trail signage, parking areas, etc.

Ms. Gero then pointed out the location of the 9.1 acres of open space that has been permanently dedicated as open space in connection with the Patton Ridge development. By Town meeting vote, the Conservation Commission has jurisdiction of this 9.1 acres. The remaining open space at the Homestead is merely Town owned land that can be used for any municipal purpose subject to appropriate approvals - it has not been permanently dedicated as open space. There was then a discussion regarding whether it would be appropriate to increase the permanently dedicated area to include one or all of (1) the canoe launch area, (2) the strip at the western edge of the property, (3) the pond, and (4) the buffer and other resource areas. Mr. Tarr and others noted that the Conservation Commission is looking at this issue and has asked the Town Manager to attend its next meeting in order to explain why those areas shouldn't be permanently dedicated as open space.

Mr. Rimmer then noted that there are many issues that need to be resolved over time with respect to the open space at the Patton Homestead, but that it would be fairly easy to activate the trail to the viewing platform and canoe launch so that it could be used by the general public. He also noted that Greenbelt envisioned this trail to be a joint Greenbelt/Town of Hamilton trail given the ownership of the land. As such, Greenbelt is willing to lend it expertise and assist the Town in activating the trail.

Those present agreed that the following needs to be done in order to fully activate that trail:

1. Signage - The parties discussed signage at Asbury Street, an information kiosk at the end of the parking area, and interpretative signage at the viewing platform. Mr. Rimmer noted that Greenbelt has an in-house design person who could develop proposed schemes/designs for such signs. He also said that Greenbelt could provide preliminary cost estimates based on signs they had purchased in the past. The Open Space Committee agreed to work on possible names for the trail as well as the text that could go on the kiosk sign. Given that the trail system at the Patton Homestead will develop over time, it was agreed that any signs with trail maps, etc. should be of a material that is less expensive and possibly less durable (ie., vinyl vs. fiberglass) since it would need to be replaced as other trails/trail connections are developed.
2. Access Road from Asbury Street to Pump House - Dave Rimmer questioned whether the grade of the wood road from Asbury Street to the parking area at the pump house should be modified to make winter plowing, etc. easier. It was agreed that we should obtain the view of the DPW Director on this issue.
3. Possible Improvements to Parking Area - It was again agreed that we should get the view of the DPW Director regarding whether work should be done at the parking area to better define the area and/or improve its surface. Also, it was agreed that a chain or gate of some sort should be erected at the beginning of the trail in order to prevent motorized vehicles from accessing the trail. The OSC should work with the DPW Director to determine whether this is something the DPW can provide. Mr. Peters noted that it would be helpful if the pump house could be removed to create more parking space. It was acknowledged that this is likely to be costly and the DPW may have more information on the status of the pump house.
4. Ongoing Maintenance - Greenbelt has agreed to maintain the viewing platform and canoe launch area free from weeds. The trail itself will need occasional mowing in order to keep it free of weeds and brush. The access road and parking area will need to be plowed in winter if the trail will be open in the winter.
5. Rules - All present agreed that rules for the use of the trail should be made explicit and should be posted. There was general agreement that motorized vehicles should be prohibited. There was much discussion regarding whether dogs should be allowed on the trail, and if so, under what conditions (ie., on leash, with doggie bags provided by Town, etc.). Mr. Rimmer noted that the Town should be careful to impose only rules that would be enforced. Ms. Kennedy voiced her opinion that dogs should not be allowed as the trail should be a place where adults and children could view the wildlife without it being

disturbed by dogs. While others present were in favor of allowing dogs only on leashes, the general agreement was that dogs should be allowed, there is a leash law in Hamilton, and that nothing further is needed for this trail.

6. Trash Barrels/Doggie Bag Barrels - There was general agreement that the trail should be a "pack in/pack out" trail. There was a question regarding whether the Town should have a trash barrel and/or a doggie bag barrel in the parking area. Mr. Rimmer and Ms. Lawrence noted that Greenbelt and ECTA trails do not have trash barrels or doggie bag barrels because they don't have the staff/resources to empty these barrels. They did note that the Trustees of Reservation has doggie bag barrels and doggie bag dispensers at several of its properties. It was noted that the use of this trail might not be sufficiently heavy to warrant trash barrels/doggie bag barrels.

Ms. Gero noted that whatever is decided regarding the above items needs to be reviewed and agreed by the Conservation Commission and the Board of Selectmen since they will be the ultimate decision makers. The OSC's role is merely advisory.

The parties also discussed the current canoe launch and the fact that there currently is no vehicular access to this area for canoe drop-off/ pick-up. Mr. Rimmer noted that this access point is not a good launching point during periods of low water levels, and that more convenient points are located only a short distance from the property. He said that the canoe launch at the Cox Reservation is not frequently used. So while a canoe launch point would be ideal, he didn't see it as a crucial point for the activation of the property. The parties noted that if the Town constructs the proposed parking lot and access drive thereto, it would provide a link to the wood lot road which leads to the canoe launch.

Ms. Gero noted that the trail to the viewing platform would be ideal for senior citizens and young children in that it is short, the trail bed is fairly flat, and there is a viewing platform with seating at the end. The Town needs trails that are handicap accessible, and this could be such a trail. Once the signs are installed and the parking area is better defined, it would be nice to promote it with the Council for Aging, co-ordinate with the Recreation Department to advertise it, and host a few walks to or events at the viewing platform.

The agreed action items were as follows:

Greenbelt:

- Produce preliminary schemes for trail signage together with preliminary cost estimates
- Determine whether Greenbelt can produce an appropriate map for inclusion on the kiosk

Ms. Gero:

- Arrange a visit to the site by DPW Director and Mr. Rimmer in order to discuss the following:
 - need for improvements to access point and/or road from Asbury Street to parking area
 - need for improvements to delineate/improve parking area
 - Town plans for the maintenance of the pump house
 - whether Town can install chain or gate at end of parking area
 - who will mow trail
 - whether trail should be open in winter
 - if trail is to be open in winter, who will plow
 - should trash barrels be installed

OSC:

- Research Town logo/seal for inclusion on signage
- Come up with several suggested names for the open space area (ie., "Patton Reservation"?) and trail (ie., "Patton Riverwalk" ? "Turtle Bank Trail"? , etc.)
- Come up with text for possible inclusion on kiosk
- Come up with a preliminary list of the rules for the use of the trail

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 am.