Freeport Conservation Commission

Minutes for December 14, 2021

6:30pm – Freeport Community Center

Attendees: Ben Shepard, Ryan Burke, Anna Cudmore, Catherine Carroll, Matt McLaughlin, John Stroud, Margaret Gerber, Carrie Kinne, Tawni Whitney, Peter Joseph, Dan Piltch, Matt Warner

1. Approve minutes from November meeting
   1. John Stroud made motion to approve, Matt McLaughlin seconded
   2. Minutes approved unanimously
2. NEMBA presentation/discussion
   1. Matt Warner introduced the Southern Maine chapter for the New England Mountain Bike Association (NEMBA)
   2. NEMBA has a 10-person volunteer board
   3. In 2021, has used $45,000 and volunteer labor to build about 20 miles of trails
   4. NEMBA covers from Bradbury Mountain south to the New Hampshire border
   5. NEMBA seeks to build a mountain bike trail network at Hedgehog Mountain
      1. NEMBA has done 6 to 7 site walks at Hedgehog
      2. NEMBA likes at Hedgehog the terrain changes, good soils and forest setting
      3. NEMBA hasn’t observed Hedgehog being packed with users
      4. NEMBA’s proposal is to build 6-7 miles of trails and a pump track
         1. A pump track is a circular track that introduced kids to mountain biking
         2. Ryan Burke and Margaret Gerber attended a site walk with NEMBA on December 10
         3. NEMBA wants the trail system to appeal to kids
         4. To implement NEMBA’s proposal, the Hedgehog Management Plan would need to be changed due to restrictions to mountain biking on the summit due to past issues with erosion and preserving vegetation
         5. NEMBA’s proposed trails would be machine built to have a uniform width that limit erosion and would be built to be about 6-12 inches thick
            1. Gravel would be avoided as it encourages mountain bikers to go too fast. The trails proposed would be dirt single track trails
      5. Catherine Carroll asked about how ongoing trail maintenance would be managed
         1. In Gorham, they used a summer employee to handle maintenance needs on NEMBA trails in Gorham
         2. NEMBA leans a lot on volunteer labor with about 3,500 followers on social media
         3. NEMBA would consider a Memorandum of Understanding, but has found these to lack enforceability in the past
      6. NEMBA has found that Bradbury Mountain isn’t as popular anymore with its mountain bike trial network
      7. NEMBA has about 35-40 miles of trails in Gorham on various properties, and also maintains trails in Falmouth
      8. Hedgehog has three parking areas today at the Pownal Road Football Fields, the Transfer Station access and the Hunter Road fields
         1. Need to be careful on Hunter Road fields due to several event days a year that consume most of the parking, but the Football Field parking is rarely at full utilization
         2. This could also be managed with better signage and fixing up some kiosks in dis-repair on the property
      9. Managing hikers and bikers using the same trail system
         1. NEMBA thought this could be managed with signage to make people aware to share the trails, but this is only so effective
         2. NEMBA’s proposal is to build new trails just for mountain bikers to not overlap with existing hiking trails
         3. Ben Shepard cautioned this needs to be managed around the Transfer Station Access and the summit, which are the more highly used areas of the property by hikers and dog walkers
            1. Ryan Burke proposed a separate mountain bike trail to the summit
      10. Funding source
          1. NEMBA seeking to submit an application by the end of the year for a $100k grant from LL Bean
             1. For money to be available in 2022
          2. Other grants would be applied for
          3. No Town funding being sought
      11. Connections to other properties
          1. Downtown/Connect Freeport idea
             1. Complete Streets and Active Living Committees have been looking at connections over I-295 between west side of Freeport and Downtown, which would link in with Hedgehog Mountain
          2. Bradbury Mountain connections
             1. A NEMBA board member has talked to a snowmobile trail club and other property owners between Hedgehog and Bradbury Mountains
      12. Margaret Gerber mentioned that wildlife impacts need to be considered in any future plans for Hedgehog
      13. Ben Shepard made motion for the Commission being open to the proposal for Hedgehog Mountain from NEMBA, but cannot approve at this time. The Commission would like to discuss further with NEMBA, involving the Freeport Conservation Trust and other interested parties from the Town the following:
          1. Managing conflicts between mountain bikers and existing users of the property
          2. Developing existing infrastructure (bathrooms, parking, trash removal)
          3. Wildlife, vegetation and environmental impacts
          4. Ongoing and future maintenance
          5. Ryan Burke seconded the motion
             1. Voting for the motion were:

Ben Shepard

Matt McLaughlin

Anna Cudmore

John Stroud

Margaret Gerber

Ryan Burke

* + - * 1. Voting against the motion were:

Catherine Carroll

1. Freeport Conservation Trust
   1. Carrie Kinne is the chair of the Freeport Conservation Trust
   2. Carrie Kinne mentioned that the next Freeport Trail Challenge will be in August 2022
      1. Hedgehog Mountain will be in the next Challenge, with the trail going to the summit featured
   3. Conservation Commission to copy Carrie Kinne on Conservation Commission correspondence, and vice versa
      1. FCT holds monthly board meetings, and plans to hold regular stewardship meetings
2. Motion to adjourn
   1. John made motion, Matt seconded, all approved
3. The following times ere tabled for a future Conservation Commission meeting:
   1. Budget update
   2. Property updates
      1. Florida Lake
         1. Work Day Held on 11/20
            1. Two bridges built, gate repaired, culvert repaired and fallen trees removed
         2. One bridge built by Ben Shepard afterwards
      2. Hedgehog
         1. Brochure for cross country trails
            1. Ben Shepard made a brochure and shared with the Commission via email

John Stroud made some comments, which Ben Shepard reviewed

* + 1. Quarry Woods
       1. Parking lot
          1. Ben Shepard and Carrie Kinne exchanged some information on parking lots developed for FCT properties

Next meeting: January 11, 2022