

TRAILS COMMITTEE MEETING

February 24, 2009 – 3:00 p.m.

PRESENT: Chairman Veitch; Supervisors Connelly, Wright, Wormuth, Richardson; Jason Kemper, Planning; George Hodgson, EMC; Larry Gordon, Town of Wilton; Press

Chairman Veitch called the meeting to order.

Chairman Veitch said one member, Devin DalPos, is not here today, but he is the president of the Saratoga Springs Southwest Neighborhood Association. He said he has worked with that group for a few years on a Geyser Road trail. We felt it was good to have a couple of outside folks on the Committee, he said. Mr. DalPos is at a meeting with DEC today. He said Larry Gordon is a life-long Wilton resident and a member of the Wilton Town Board, and several of the parcels we will be dealing with are located in the Town of Wilton on the border of Northumberland, and he knows the area well.

Chairman Veitch appointed Tom Richardson as Vice-Chairman of the Committee.

Chairman Veitch said this Committee's mission is to try to find ways to implement the trails portion of the Green Infrastructure Plan. The immediate mission is to develop walking trails and possible some biking trails within the forested lands of Saratoga County. Later on, we can make recommendations on other trails we would like developed as part of the Green Infrastructure Plan and funding opportunities. He said he has his own agenda in try to obtain funding from the Board to give back to municipalities going forward to develop trails. We may want to consider that down the road, he said.

Mr. Kemper distributed copies of aerial photo maps of reforested lands of Saratoga County for potential trails on Loudon Rd. Ingersoll Rd./Bog Meadow Run; Bullard Ln./Edie Rd.; Ruggles Rd; Taylor Rd.; Duncan Rd.; Colebrook Rd.; Pettis Rd.; Ruggles Rd., Gailor Ln. He said as soon they can, George, Troy and he can get out there with the GPS unit to figure out what is existing for trails and come back with a map and a better understanding of what we have for existing corridors. Chairman Veitch requested Mr. Kemper to let him know when they plan on going so that the Committee members can also be invited to go along to look at the parcels. It will be a learning experience, he stated. He said he is familiar with these parcels. It would be good for all of us to get out there to take a look, he stated. We could invite the press to go along as well, he added.

Mr. Hodgson stated the County owns about 3,000 acres of forested lands. The majority of the land is in Moreau, Northumberland and Wilton. He said each parcel has a history. For areas to be available for people to take their dogs to run without leads, the proximity of the parcels near the roadways, particularly high-speed roads, must be evaluated. There are a lot of things that should go into this to make sure the proposals we put forth are safe proposals, he said. Roads would be a consideration to the safety of pets. We need to define where the existing logging roads are and to see if the logs landings could be used as parking lots. Each one of these parcels should be evaluated, he said. He stated we do

have an agreement with the Wilton Wildlife Preserve and Park, and ½ dozen of the County's parcels are included within their boundary. It is a logical extension of the property to make it more inviting to the public, he said. Chairman Veitch said he believes the parcel near the Mall is good because of available parking pavement already there, and there is a small walking trail along the edge of the Wilton Mall road. That is like a ready-made entrance to get into that parcel, he said. A second parcel on the other side of Loudon Road has been looked at as a possible dog walking area. There is a waterway that runs down to the south, and there are actually other trails south that the City of Saratoga Springs built called the Bog Meadow Trail. We were thinking of starting a connecting trail that runs back through the woods to get to that trail. Mr. Hodgson said there are some wetlands around Bog Meadow. Making connections to existing trails obviously makes sense, he stated. Mr. Gordon said some of these trails are remnants of what was there before the Northway or the Schuylerville/Saratoga Railroad. He said when you select a wet area as a viable path, you have to deal with DEC, and they will want a pile of information. So when you can, stay out of registered wetlands or you may want a path going down to it for fishing. The Town of Wilton has an open space recreation trails plan, and they already own rights to property on a subdivision called Morris Drive. On a map, he pointed out their trail connection on their current plan from the Jones Rd. area all the way down to the Mall. There is a lot going on very close to what Chairman Veitch is talking about, he said. This past fall, we built another half a mile of trails in Wilton from the Scout Camp to Edie Rd., he said. He pointed out on a map that State Lot 45 is wildlife management, that is a classification that DEC has, and in there dogs off leash are not permitted unless they are part of a shooting sport. In the Town of Wilton, there is a leash law, he said.

Mr. Hodgson said in his involvement over the last 34 years overseeing some of these forestry lands, people have a tendency to think of them as their back yard – it's amazing what you find in some of these areas. You get into a situation with a high speed road on one side, and a subdivision on the other, it can be potentially problematic with dogs, he said. We need to scope it out and find out the parameters for usage, he said.

Mr. Richardson said you are thinking about using the Wilton Mall as part of an entrance to one of these trails. Would the Mall be opposed to something like that, he asked. He said he knows of a couple of problems in Mechanicville where the parking spots are being taken because someone is riding a bus to Albany or something like that. He said he does not want some of the Mall's merchants questioning why people are parking in the Mall and walking a trail. Chairman Veitch said he talked to Art Johnson last week about some of our preliminary designs. He said he told Mr. Johnson it would make sense to park in the Mall if the Mall would agree to it.

Mr. Gordon said with State ownerships, they are Wildlife Management, and when they buy the land for butterflies, turtles, walking, etc., their primary focus is the money that comes to buy all that land is coming from the license fees of people who are hunters. People ask me why are we letting hunters go in these properties, and I tell them because the hunters' money bought it, he said. The other uses are secondary, he said. He stated the Town put up signage on its property stating when you cross the yellow line, you

know exactly where you are as a hiker. Mr. Richardson asked if we want to put in walking trails where high powered rifles are allowed? He said he is concerned about that. Mr. Gordon said Wildlife Management also allows target practicing as long as you do not create a dangerous situation. In discussing the dog areas on the trails, Chairman Veitch said dogs would have to be on a leash. He said down the road, we would have to figure out signage and how to mark the trails, etc. Mrs. Wormuth said in Clifton Park, they have a fenced area for dogs. When you go in, you sign the dog in, and then you can take the dog off of the leash in the fenced area. Chairman Veitch said in Wilton, dogs are required to be on a leash.

Mr. Gordon said for Wilton's Open Space Recreation Trails Plan, one of the concepts was trying to get people from Wilton to Saratoga. Legally, a pedestrian or bicyclist cannot cross the Northway. He pointed out on the map how to get down to Route 29 and the Bog Meadow Trail which allows you to proceed into Saratoga on the right of way of Route 29. Chairman Veitch said he never knew of the opportunities until he looked at the maps and saw the potential to do that. We have to think small first, get the first parcel done and go from there, he said. We have a very limited budget, he stated. That's part of the idea of putting the parking lot at the Mall since it is right there. He said he will have Kate Maynard, Wilton Town Planner, deal with the owners of the Mall. He mentioned there is a bus stop there also. Mr. Kemper said he will develop a list of each parcel with the pros and cons and the 500 ft. buffer of all existing houses and where people can and cannot be, and he will get that out to the Committee. Chairman Veitch said the City owns some of the lands heading south, and he will talk to the Mayor to see what they think as far as making recreation out of that. Mr. Kemper said Mr. Hodgson and he will get out there as soon as they can in the spring. Chairman Veitch said it would be good to get the Committee out there to orient ourselves. He said it would be nice some time for a family to go shopping at the Mall and when they are done, they can take a walk with the kids on the trails.

Mr. Richardson asked if there would be discussions by this Committee on the Zim Smith Trail, etc. Chairman Veitch said we really haven't discussed what this Committee will actually take on. Right now, it has been done in Economic Development, but I see us taking that issue on, he said. He said he will talk to Supervisor Daly to see what she thinks. As part of the Green Infrastructure Plan, I believe that's part of this Committee's mission to work on some of that. Mr. Gordon said one of the most important trail connections that's talked about and ignored is getting from the Spa State Park to Ballston Spa on either the sewer bed or the water line, and then there is a clear connection all the way straight down. Chairman Veitch said we have to explore opportunities for funding. He said this is a big issue, and there is a lot to be done, he stated. This is a good start where we are at right now, he said. Hopefully, in April, it will be warm enough to get out there, he added. Mr. Kemper said they will get out there with the GPS to get an idea of where to be walking.

Mr. Gordon said he will be asking Warrensburg if they are doing a unit management plan on that parcel 45, because once you have an in place management plan, that's cast in concrete bureaucratically and we might want to think about how to connect that piece

from Morris over to 45 and how to use the old fire lane where the steel gate is so at least it gets on their radar.

On a motion by Mr. Richardson, seconded by Mrs. Wormuth, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Elaine M. Sodemann