

Trails Committee Minutes
July 13, 2020 – 3:00 p.m.

Present: Chairman Richardson; Committee members Devin DalPos, Jason Kemper, Michael Smith, Matt Veitch and Tom Wood; Supervisor Eric Connolly, Jeffrey Williams, Planning.

Chairman Richardson called the meeting to order and welcomed all in attendance.

On a motion made by Mr. Smith, seconded by Mr. Veitch the minutes of the November 4, 2019 meeting were approved unanimously.

Mr. Richardson announced the appointment of Mr. Smith as the Committee Vice-Chair.

Mr. Kemper gave an update on the Zim Smith Trail. The final bollards should be installed tomorrow morning, and some garbage cans to install with the Town of Halfmoon. Other than that it is fully complete. If any Supervisor is interested in a tour from Mr. Kemper let him know. The trail use is through the roof. Today, both parking lots at Coons Crossing and the lot at Round Lake was full. Mr. Richardson said that it's not only walkers, but people riding their bikes. Mr. Kemper said that he has received a lot of positive feedback from those that are using the trail. Mr. Richardson commended Mr. Kemper for all of his work on the trail and said that the portion from Coons Crossing to Mechanicville is absolutely beautiful. Mr. Kemper said that the City of Mechanicville has a County grant for signage. People will be able to go directly from the trail to the Champlain Canalway Trail. Mr. Richardson said that the trails intersect in the City of Mechanicville at the riverfront dock. Restroom facilities are also available at this location. Mr. Kemper said that porta pottys are currently being used until the permanent facilities can be reopened. Mr. Kemper thanked the Sewer Department, Steve Dorsey and DPW on all of the help they provided with the trail.

Mr. Veitch said that he walked all of the County trails this spring. Most of the trails are in good shape, and suggested that some need a little work to bring back to their original construction state. Mr. Veitch said that he took a lot of photos and will send suggestions to Mr. Kemper about certain areas that need attention, signage, markings, etc.

Mr. Smith asked if there was a directory of County trails available. It would be nice to have a master trail plan put together to give people an idea of what is out there. Mr. Kemper said that there is an overall county forestland map that people could use but none on every individual parcel. Mr. Kemper said that they have GPS layers on everything that exists on all of the properties for County Forestland, so something collaborative can be done on that portion and include county trails. Getting into Plan and Town trails will be a little more complex. Mr. Smith said that Ms. Trabka had mentioned they would be coming out with something this spring. Mr. Veitch said that this is something he will talking to Mr. Kemper about also. Not all of the trails out there are formalized and don't have proper signage. His concern is that people could get lost on some of the trails that are not properly marked. Mr. Richardson suggested that the County could formalize 1-2 trails a year. Mr. Veitch and Mr. Kemper said that they will work together on the trail suggestions. Mr. Richardson suggested bringing Mr. Manz in on the conversation also.

Mr. Kemper gave an update on County Forestland. Mr. Kemper said that there are two timber projects they are currently working on as part of the Karner Blue Butterfly project. Moving some

of the habitat from the Saratoga County Airport to the Towns of Northumberland and Wilton. The northernmost site is completed and is ready for the mitigation work to start. The south site has not started yet due to the pandemic. The contractor has asked for an extension to September 30th which will still give enough time for the mitigation work, if the FAA grant is received.

Mr. Kemper distributed a summary report of the Saratoga County Trails Program from 2015-2020 and gave a brief overview. The report is attached to these minutes.

Mr. Kemper distributed a draft Saratoga County Trails Grant Program for 2020. Mr. Kemper said that his goal would be to get the applications out so that the Board can approve in October. Mr. Richardson suggested giving municipalities until the end of August to hand in the applications. Mr. Kemper said that this grant has always been 100% match of the applicants contribution to the project costs up to \$10,000.

Mr. Veitch said that his only concern is the climate we are currently in. Public Works and Buildings & Grounds have made substantial cuts to their projects. The optics of spending \$75K on trails are a little strange when other projects have been cut significantly. Mr. Veitch said that he is not opposed to spending the funds if the Board agrees to spending, but is wondering if there is an opportunity to bring this to Economic Development to see how they feel about expending the funds prior to sending the application out. Mr. Kemper said that a similar discussion was had with Mr. Grattidge on Land Preservation. Mr. Smith said that during the pandemic, having trails for people to come out and spend time in the Town was an economic development plus for his Town. Mr. Smith said that last year when they increased the funding from \$50K to \$75K, he was a proponent of raising it to \$100K. Spending \$75K to give people more places to go and get out is money well spent in his opinion. Mr. Richardson agreed with Mr. Smith and believes that this is the time to spend money as they will be putting people to work, people need jobs and the economy needs to move forward. Mr. Wood agreed and said that people appreciate, use the trails, and benefit from the trails investment. Mr. Kemper said that he would not like to see applications come in and then have the funding pulled back. Mr. Richardson said that he will bring it up at Economic Development for discussion. Mr. Kemper said that one thing they need to consider is that a reserve account was set up for Trails whereby any unused trails funding automatically goes into the reserve account. It needs to be researched that if the funding is not spent this year, the funds may not be saved, but rather automatically go into the reserve account. This reserve account was set up by Local Law. Mr. Veitch said that he will discuss it with the County Attorney tomorrow and report back to Mr. Richardson. It may be a moot point. If there is no option in holding off, then the applications could be sent out. Mr. Richardson will update the committee on the outcome of the research.

Mr. Veitch said that he was contacted by Supervisor Schopf regarding an item. Recently in the news there was an initiative in Albany County to have vendors on the Hudson Helderberg Rail Trail to help spur some economic development and provide amenities for people using the trails. Mr. Veitch distributed copies of a news article from Albany County regarding this initiative. The handout is attached to these minutes. Mr. Veitch said that he is not sure what we have in terms of locations this can but done, but it sounds like a good idea and possibly a revenue generator. Mr. Richardson said that his thoughts on the idea is that he would like people who are using the Zim Smith Trail to come to Mechanicville to spend their money, with merchants in his locality, rather than a food truck halfway down the trail. Mr. Richardson said that local merchants benefit from

people on the trail, for example in Round Lake, he has seen people walking from the trail to the Mill Restaurant to frequent that business. Mr. Smith said that it an interesting idea but a lot of thought would need to be put into what would, and would not, be allowed, where it would be allowed. Mr. Veitch said that Zim Smith Trail is mainly County right of way for sewer and water line access. This is not necessarily County property where something like this could be placed. Mr. Wood said that initially he would not be a fan of bringing in food trucks etc. Mr. Wood said that he agrees with Mr. Richardson and that although his trails are not county trails, his municipality had envisioned all along that these trails would help to bring people through the village and ultimately spend money, go to restaurants etc.

Mr. Veitch said that it's an idea, Mr. Richardson thanked Mr. Veitch and said that all ideas are welcome. Mr. Kemper said that the last usage count of the trail was over 70K. Mr. Richardson said that if he could get 3K of those 70K to walk into Mechanicville and spend \$10-\$12 a head, it would certainly help his local businesses.

Mr. Kemper said that last year they were unsuccessful in getting the Zim Smith feasibility study north through CDTC. He is planning to polish the application off and resubmit it. Matching funds are available in the Zim Smith Capital account. Mr. Kemper said that they have stronger letters of support this time and a better, broader plan. State Parks is fully on board as they really want a connection. Mr. Veitch said that Geyser will be done in a few weeks which will provide another connector.

On a motion made by Mr. Veitch, seconded by Mr. Smith the meeting was adjourned unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Therese Connolly
Deputy Clerk of the Board