



# Town of Ashland

## M A S S A C H U S E T T S

Town Forest Committee Minutes

Wednesday May 25, 2022, 5:00 PM

Members Present: Brian Forestal, Mike Jones, Brian McGrattan, Cathy Rooney (joined meeting about 5:45 PM), Rob St. Germain, Cara Hulme, Mike Morrissey

Guest: Becca Solomon, Ashland's Conservation Agent

Members Absent: None

Public Present: None

### Call to Order

### Agenda

Site visit to discuss and approve detailed locations of the proposed North Trail and proposed modifications to North and South trail Oak St ends.

### Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 PM on the trail at the ATF's Oak Street entrance.

Ms. Hulme was given voting rights in Ms. Rooney's absence.

### **Rerouting the Black Unnamed Trail after the bridge at the Oak Street entrance to the Proposed Green Trail. (Area A on the map below)**

Facing east, Mr. Forestal proposed rerouting the current approved trail to the right and parallel to the stream because of concerns about water coming down the trail, causing erosion to the trail and the bridge abutment. The current trail is routed down the fall line of the hill and in Mr. Forestal's opinion the incline of about 15 degrees promotes trail erosion. In Mr. Forestal's experience and training, trails should have an incline of no more than 10 degrees, and an average of 5 degrees. Mr. Forestal suggested closing off the current trail and rerouting the trail parallel to the stream to meet up with the White Trail further to the south. The suggested new route of the Green trail would be within the 100 foot buffer zone of the stream.

Mr. McGrattan asked if it was feasible to put the trail through the buffer zone.

Ms. Solomon said it was feasible however the ATFC would need to notify the abutting property owners, post an ad in the local paper, provide for public comment and get agreement to make a change to the trail's Order of Conditions, which is currently still open.

Mr. St. Germain disagreed with Mr. Forestal's opinion on the trail erosion concern. The current trail route was designed to take the user away from the wetlands and apartments quickly, and the proposed re-route would not do that.

Mr. St. Germain stated that the trail, as built, sheds water naturally. Mr. Jones stated that "the water coming down the trail would collect in the secondary swale and that is alright."

Ms. Solomon said the proposed trail route would put the trail in the 100 year flood zone.

The ATFC walked to current trail and discussed the trail's incline, the patterns of water flow, and the remediation if the trail begins to erode. Since the potential erosion areas are not in wetlands the remediation is to put gravel in these areas.

Mr. McGrattan made a motion to accept the currently approved trail "as is" until it is deemed to need to change. The ATFC vote was 4-1-0, with Mr. Forestal voting no and the motion passed.

### **North Trail – New Section from the Black Unnamed Trail to about 50 yards past the Smaller Glacial Erratic (Areas B & C on the map below)**

Mr. St. Germain said, "a small portion of the current trail route is in a no disturb area, but the ATFC has permission to route the trail there."

The current proposal, outlined with Red tape (Orange line on area B on the map below), is to go through the rock wall at an existing break near the smaller glacial erratic. A new proposal was to move the wall crossing down about 50 yards past the smaller glacial erratic, but not as far as the certified vernal pool.

Ms. Solomon said the certified vernal pool has the same protections as a wetland, hiking is OK, but biking would require additional clearance.

Mr. Forestal proposed an alternate route outlined with Pink/Orange tape (Green line on area C on the map below), that is closer to the wetlands and would require a bridge over the stream. The bridge would be 40 feet long. Ms. Solomon added the bridge needs to be 36 inches high to allow animals to cross under it. A bridge would require Conservation Commission approval.

At this point in the meeting Ms. Rooney joined the group, and became a voting member, in place of Ms. Hulme.

ATFC member comments:

- Ms. Hulme: liked the "full immersion in the forest" of the proposed Red taped trail.
- Mr. Morrissey: the bridge, particularly the height, on the alternate Pink taped trail is a concern.
- Mr. McGrattan: walkers tend to cut across the loops in looping trails.
- Mr. Forestal: there are ways to prevent walkers from cutting across the loops.
- Mr. St. Germain: a concern regarding the alternate Pink taped trail is the proximity to the established brook.

- Mr. Forestal: the alternate “Pink” route provides full immersion, a number of curves that deal with the hill, and over twice the distance of the proposed route. Users don’t cut off the loops and if they do, the ATFC can install blockers made of brush.
- Ms. Rooney: The Conservation Commission will ask the question “Why should we let the ATFC build a trail and bridge in wetlands?,” and the ATFC will need to have a good solid answer.

Per Ms. Solomon the proposed Red taped route is in one buffer area and the alternate Pink taped route goes through a wetland and has a stream crossing both of which require approvals.

At this point there were two proposals:

- The Red taped trail route closer to the stone wall and the route Bill Moulton originally proposed.
- The Pink taped trail route closer to the wetlands.

Mr. Jones made a motion to adopt the Red taped trail route closer to the stonewall and establish the stone wall crossing about 50 feet down the wall away from the small erratic. Mr. St. Germain seconded the motion. The ATFC vote was 3-2-0, with Mr. Forestal and Ms. Rooney voting no and the motion passed.

#### **North Trail – New Section from the Stone Wall crossing to the Flat Area.**

Both Mr. St. Germain and Mr. Forestal agreed to the routing of this section of the trail.

The ATFC did not vote on adopting this section of the trail.

#### **North Trail – New Section from the Flat Area to the Overlook**

Mr. Forestal proposed the Orange and hot Pink taped trail route which takes a right turn towards the ledge. This route stays closer to the wall, crosses over the Red taped trail, looped to the overlook and traversed the hill, halfway up, with a “bench” cut.

Mr. St. Germain proposed the Red taped trail route which bears left, goes around the rock outcropping, parallel to the rock wall and over the saddle.

Mr. Jones wanted to stay closer to the rock wall.

Ms. Rooney and Mr. McGrattan proposed a change to the Orange and hot Pink taped route, called the “hypotenuse” route, by cutting off the angle and staying clear of the wetlands. This route ran between the two big oak trees, the 4 trunk oak and the 3 trunk oak.

Ms. Rooney made a motion to accept the Orange and hot Pink taped trail route with the “hypotenuse” route, creating “less of a right turn” between the oaks to the ledge on to the “hot Pink” trail and then on to the established informal trail towards the ledge. Mr. McGrattan seconded the motion. The ATFC vote was 3-2-0, with Mr. Forestal and Mr. Jones voting no and the motion passed. Ms. Rooney remarked the trail route passed by the ATFC.

At this point it was close to 7:00 PM and Ms. Solomon had to leave.

**Meeting Adjourned**

Ms. Rooney made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Mr. McGrattan seconded the motion. The ATFC vote was 5-0-0, the motion passed, and the meeting was adjourned at 6:58 pm.

Appendix

