

Countywide Trails Initiative Minutes

Tuesday, January 16th, 2024, 4:30 pm

50 W. High Street, Ballston Spa, NY 12020

Attendees:

Charlie Dake – Saratoga PLAN

Jason Kemper – Saratoga County

Barbara Kerr – Town of Milton

Kim Lambert – Saratoga County

Jeff Williams – Saratoga County

Ted Orosz – City of Saratoga Springs

Seamus Briody – Saratoga PLAN

Rob Davies – Saratoga PLAN

Mary Ann Morgan – Town of Milton

Bill Herman – Town of Halfmoon

- News/Announcements:
 - Had someone volunteer to take up secretary role, person not present at meeting today
 - Bonnie Nightingale (PLAN) raised the idea of a public contact list to facilitate further communication
 - Idea is that those in the “bcc” list on the email chain would be on the “cc” list
 - Bonnie will explain more next meeting
- News:
 - Funding Opportunities
 - County Farmland Open Space Grant program has been released
 - Process has been moved up this year, applications will be due March 29th
 - Trail grants expected to come out next month when Trails and Open Space Committee meets
 - Nonregional news
 - Rail Trail Opportunities
 - Generally, in the northern part of the county
 - Rob Davies noted there’s a lot of interest, but can be complicated

- Idea raised to extend Zim Smith to Glenville, Jason Kemper noted the County is currently just interested in connecting Mechanicville to Saratoga Springs
- Updates from Communities
 - Saratoga County (Jason Kemper)
 - In design for Zim Smith from Oak Street to Malta Ave, hopeful to break ground in Spring 2025 on this piece
 - In conversation with landowners currently
 - Unlike other parts of the Zim, this piece is crossing yards, etc.
 - Ultimately need to get to Saratoga Spa State Park with an offroad trail from Mechanicville
 - Crossing the Kayaderosseras also a large project in itself
 - County has been working with PLAN as Graphite Range Community Forest is open
 - Freeze/Thaw cycle has thrown a bit of a loop, but County and PLAN working well through those issues
 - County will make presentation to the Town of Greenfield for the GRCF Northern Gateway in the spring
 - Hopefully that will open and alleviate the parking situation at current trailhead
 - Milton
 - At a “stand still” on Wood’s Hollow (municipal owned parkland), needs home rule legislation to transfer ownership
 - Currently owned by Village of Ballston Spa, want to transfer to Town of Milton
 - Waiting on Albany for legislation
 - Was previously going to be logged, Town of Milton intends to keep it as parkland
 - Stone Church Property
 - Located at Stone Church and Route 29
 - An appraisal was sent by the landowner, Town of Milton unable to sign off
 - Boice Park
 - Property near Boice Park, lots of wetlands, frontage on the Kayaderosseras, connects to current Boice Park and PLAN lands
 - Trying to contact people who originally did extension of Boice
 - Discussed with Saratoga PLAN on working together on property together
 - Waiting on reply from landowner
 - Just started updating town Comprehensive Plan
 - NYS Parks, Saratoga/Capital Region – Moreau/Grant Cottage/Big Bend

- Moreau Lake State Park –
 - A major backcountry trail re-route of a 3 phase project was completed this past summer season by our regional trail crew, setting us up to finish the 3rd and final section this summer season. The last section is about a ¼ of mile of new trail construction bringing user along the edge of a ridgeline to the destination of the Spring Overlook. Completion date is anticipated to be Summer of 2024
 - A ¼ mile of Wetlands Walk trail running along the east side of back pond will be receiving a re-route this summer season by our regional trail crew, bringing the trail to a higher & dryer elevation but maintaining an identical alignment. Completion date is anticipated to be Summer of 2024
 - The Red Oak Ridge Trailhead next to the park office will start receiving some improvements by our regional trail crew through some clearing, grading, and placing of large stone to form a horseshoe style sitting area, thus defining the trailhead more for users. We plan to follow up the initial groundwork with a trail map kiosk installation at a later date. Completion date is TBD
 - Moreau Lake State Park Trail Map will be receiving some updates/edits this 2024 season which will include some new trail additions, some removals, and some re-coloring/re-naming. Anticipated publication is toward the latter part of the year.
- Grant Cottage State Historic Site– N/A
- Big Bend Preserve –
 - The trailhead parking lot outfitting roughly 26 cars is under construction. 75% of the parking lot is done, Paving ADA Parking Spots and gate installation is scheduled for Spring 2024.
 - The Big Bend Barrens Trail (Main Trail) totaling at 1.7miles from the parking area development to the Hudson River has received it's aggregate base layer, corridor pruning and destination vista clearing work, wrapped up this past Fall. Our regional trail crew is planning to surface the 1mile of type 2 subbase with 2" sand this Spring Prior to opening.
 - Winter work by our regional trail crew has begun for trail development along the Hudson River, entailing removal of over a mile of chain-link fence & corridor clearing for a larger multi-use trail loop. We aim to have this trail finished by Summer of 2024.
 - Layout for connection from the Saratoga County Forest Land to Big Bend on our side has been laid out and is being planned for construction of summer 2024 as well.
- Peebles Island State Park –
 - ¼ mile of an eastern section of the red perimeter trail was re-routed and surfaced with fine aggregate by our regional trail crew this past Fall of 2023.
 - The beginning ¼ mile of perimeter trail from the parking lot &

Empire state trail connection to the intersection of the Blue Eagles view trail was resurfaced last Fall of 2023 by our regional trail crew.

- Planning to deploy a trail counter to the entrance of the Peebles Island Trail System this Spring to start collecting trail use data. We are also planning to update the trail map at the parking lot entrance with a newly printed overlay & panel reflecting an up-to-date trail network.
- Saratoga Spa State Park –
 - North South Road Capital Project – Starting tree work January for corridor, weather provided groundwork this winter if not Spring, current completion date is early May 2024
 - Peerless Loop Trail Resurfacing 2024 – Resurfacing ½ mile of trail with aggregate (Stone Dust) Finish.
 - Geysers Creek Trail from Creekside classroom to Memorial Bench resurfacing 2024 - Resurfacing ½ mile of trail with aggregate (Stone Dust) Finish.
 - Hemlock Trail Bridge enhancements Winter-Spring 2024, our Regional Trail crew Is working on installing railings and extending the ramps of 4 different dimensional lumber bridges.
- Greenfield
 - Tupelo
 - Haven't heard anything about it since passing of Phyllis Aldrich
 - Still being mulled over by the Town of Greenfield and the owner
- Saratoga PLAN
 - Graphite Range Community Forest
 - County acquired in October
 - Some struggles with perpetual mud, but going well
 - LMSF-Moreau Connection
 - Still in limbo, not much to report
 - Palmertown/Sarah B Foulk
 - GRCF is part of this connection
 - Working with Skidmore (owns property south of GRCF)
 - Still very much a priority of Saratoga PLAN, lots of puzzle pieces to put together
 - Received an FCELT (Forest Conservation Easements for Land Trusts) Grant for the Klepetar Forest project (approx. 450 acres)
- Halfmoon
 - Currently updating the Comprehensive Plan from 2003
 - MJ Engineering is consultant for current update
 - Hopeful that town board would adopt it in 2025
 - Town has been piecing together trail network since then
 - Two key pieces:
 - Champlain Canal Trail

- Piece needs completion, lots of wetlands and beaver damage
 - Town applied for grant but did not receive it
 - Stuck on bridging the last approximately mile and a half
 - Network of neighborhood trails
 - A spine that runs west of the Champlain Canal Trail and east of the Northway
 - Pieced together as the town is subdivided
 - Often require developers to put the trail in
- Saratoga Springs – Inside the city, connections
 - Glen Mitchell Trail
 - Extension of Broadway past Skidmore towards Maple Avenue Middle School
 - Very steep, needs fencing
 - City went to Gillibrand, was unable to get an earmark for it
 - Downtown Connector
 - From Downtown to Exit 15
 - Done, no ribbon cutting – won't have ribbon cutting until they decide naming
 - When Zim Smith is connected to Saratoga Spa, other trail connections will bring a connection within a few blocks from the downtown
 - When Zim Smith is completed, city will put out an RFP to plan a connection to the downtown
 - Union Avenue
 - From the main entrance to the track east, it's state jurisdiction
 - Maintained, put in a new sidewalk and spruced up median
 - From the main entrance to the west, it's city jurisdiction
 - Crescent Avenue
 - Has gotten a \$300,000 earmark from Paul Tonko for a trail on the south side of the street
 - Confusion over whether the money is for design or construction
 - Connect a large affordable housing project going in near the casino
 - Crossing the Railroad Tracks
 - 3 bridges of interest
 - 2 owned by state, 1 owned by city
 - Would like to have pedestrian right of way over the bridges
 - Would like to connect new housing to the city
 - Champlain-Hudson Power line
 - Lots of money being used
 - Underground powerline using railroad right of way
 - County has a revenue sharing deal to distribute money to the towns

- Finalized and approved by the state
- Champlain-Hudson now has eminent domain authority
- Individual municipalities can put money towards trails and open space if they chose to do so