

## Thompson Trails Committee MINUTES

Monday June 1, 2020, 7:00pm via the Zoom online platform

In attendance: Karen Durlach, John Kochinskas, Brian Loffredo, Charlie Obert, David Ostrowski, Paul Provost; Lyann Graff, TLGV; Monique Wolanin, QVCC

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 p.m.

Brian made a MOTION, seconded by Charlie, to accept minutes of May 4, 2020. All in favor.

### Correspondence:

- Karen responded to a citizen comment via the website that money would be better spent on a pedestrian crosswalk and warning signs for safety at New Rd./East Thompson Rd. than on a port-o-john. Suggestion for crosswalk and warning signs also forwarded to Selectmen and DPW.

**Finances:** Report received but needs clarifications and amending; disbursement to Rec. Dpt. not shown

**T-shirts:** delivered to Rec. Dpt. office; Karen has order tally

**Citizens' Comments:** Monique Wolanin, of QVCC, reported on 7<sup>th</sup> annual "Tackle the Trail" race scheduled for 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday in October, 26.2 miles, Willimantic to Putnam WMCA, fundraiser for "QVCC Foundation" to help students afford QVCC education. *Asking for any volunteer help.* (Expects mid-August decision whether to hold physical race or be virtual.) Maps and information at website: [tacklethetrail.org](http://tacklethetrail.org)

### Trail updates:

- John's report on sections of Air Line most needing work forwarded to DPW (see Addenda 1). John reported pickers and knotweed encroaching on the trail beyond our capabilities to cut with hand tools. Brian has sent several letters himself to Selectmen requesting stone dust project completion. Brian drafted a letter he would like this Committee to formally submit to the Selectmen (see Addenda 2). ***MOTION, by Brian, seconded by John to send letter elucidating the benefits to the Town by making completion of the Air Line Trail Thompson section a DPW priority. ALL IN FAVOR.***
- Karen will send some sign graphics for Brian to laminate and hang addressing trash and keeping port-o-john clean
- Paul restocks train wreck pamphlets weekly and is working on a revision before having more printed. ***MOTION made by Charlie, seconded by David to spend up to \$200 to print & fold some of the color, 2-sided, tri-fold trail brochures. ALL IN FAVOR.*** (Brian and John have been printing & folding themselves gratis.)
- Erosion from bridges over the Air Line continues; state needs to build drainage for those roads
- John and Brian hope to schedule a work day to cut the trees crossing the trail behind Knights of Columbus.

### Events:

- **June CT Trails Day:** hike options listed online but no time/date specified and no leaders, encouraging folks to tour on their own keeping social distancing guidelines in mind; John submitted short video of Tri State Marker hike for website
- June 6 is the launch for viewing the Great East Thompson Train Wreck Songwriting competition entries. Voting for a winner will be through June 26. (See press release attached, Addenda 3)
- **Turkey Trot 2020:** Sponsorship letters need to be revised and distributed. (Recreation Comm. has not decided how to designate their 25% share.) Preferred date November 8 still to be confirmed.

**CT Trail Census** June 1 webinar (Charlie & Karen attended; Charlie coordinating):

1. No intercept surveys due to social distancing; lawn signs and flyers being distributed this week to place near counter (by our kiosk) with QR code for folks to take survey on their devices
2. We still need to check the monitor regularly to see it is functioning (instructions at [www.cttrailcensus.uconn.edu](http://www.cttrailcensus.uconn.edu))
3. We need to do 10 hours annually of monitor calibration, which entails a person recording data of people passing the monitor, done unobtrusively, no contact, using survey forms that differentiate types of users (survey forms at [www.cttrailcensus.uconn.edu](http://www.cttrailcensus.uconn.edu))

### **Social Media/PR/maps**

- send John photos for Facebook page
- Lyann reported TLGV is creating 5-10 minute videos of various regional trails to be available on the website; would welcome ours
- Charlie is working on a project with drone operator/videographer Elliot Webb for an Air Line/Train Wreck/Tri State Marker video; requesting a permit fee waiver from DEEP before proceeding

### **Reports from neighboring towns**

- Putnam Trails Committee meeting 6/23/20 via Zoom.

### **Other**

- UTV was winterized but needs to be started & run (John & Brian)
- John will research cost of open trailers
- Morning Beckons Farm has had multiple unpleasant incidents with ATV trespassers and damage done; suggested we will help them if they have requests we can fulfill

NEXT BUSINESS MEETING: Monday, August 3, 2020, 7:00 p.m.

Meeting adjourned 8:44 p.m.

NOTE: "Traveling Through Thompson" Wayfinding project: June 23, 6:00 pm public workshop

Addenda 1

Needed Air Line Work

John Kochinskas, May 2020

Written in order I consider in most need:

1. From New Road/East Thompson road parking lot headed towards MA needs cutting from the gate to about the cattle bridge .25. There is a well worn path but pickers and small birch trees are taking over along the sides. I think this is a quick job. Once past the cattle bridge there trail is really fine and wide and is not in need of brush cutting
2. From Sunset Hill Road to Rt 193 Thompson road it is getting overgrown. The stone dust is still in wonderful shape mostly. I think we need to get a work party to fix stone dust under the Rt 200 bridge but problem is water from road drains onto the trail washing it away. What end they start isn't a big deal most of it needs cutting back with all types of debris. There is one bridge in the middle of this section that I am unaware of its weight limits and would bet it is a turn around spot for a tractor for sure. I feel this section is really a day's work. It is one of the larger sections of our trail without road crossings and is in need of cutting back most of its length.
3. Rt 193 Thompson road to the Mechanicsville parking area. Most of the cut back is near Rt 193 side. It is a short span of trail and some of the cut back was done when work on the trail was done due to water back up below.

## Addenda 2

June 1, 2020

To Amy St. Onge, First Selectman and the Board of Selectmen

The trails committee would like to request that the Airline Trail be treated with a sense of urgency as part of the integral infrastructure of Thompson, CT.

Outdoor activities, and specifically the extensive trail system, have been cited by NECCOG in the branding and marketing study as being a key component of interest in the town, and a possible driver of the town's economic future.

The Air Line Trail, in particular, has been identified as a key component for the following reasons:

- it is a multi-town trail
- it is the location of the Tri-State Marker
- it is the location of the Great East Thompson Train Wreck
- it has been recognized as a planning project by the National Park Service
- it serves as a component leg of the Hartford Marathon Group RiMaConn relay race
- it does not, at present, receive surface maintenance support from its owner, the State of Connecticut, those tasks falling to the towns where the trail passes through
- it is the focus of the 12-Town Task Force for the State of Connecticut future funding priorities for major upgrades like bridges

The Airline Trail has been a focus of the Thompson Trails Committee for these above reasons. The town government has, in the past, been supportive of the all-volunteer Trails group. The Committee is totally self-funded, primarily through contributions and sponsorships from the running of the annual 5K Turkey Trot. In addition, while taking no funding from the town, the Trails Committee has participated in helping Town initiatives like the Wayfinding Initiative with financial support from its own fundraising efforts.

The Airline Trail is currently seeing a vast expansion in use due to current social distancing regulations and in turn is seeing a large percentage of first time users, many from Massachusetts and Rhode Island (anecdotal data from Committee members' discussions with trail users, as well as trail census data).

We ask that the Board of Selectmen act with the Department of Public Works, to prioritize the work on the trail that was begun three years ago, the completion of the stone dust project, particularly in the area between Lowell Davis Road and Sand Dam Road. This area is most cited by users as the most difficult to pass through, especially if riding bicycles. Essentially, Thompson is creating its own "gap" in the continuous trail by not maintaining the surface in that area. Last year this project was put on hold as the more important priority of resurfacing roads was attended to with paving money available for that work. We would like to see the surface of the aforementioned trail section addressed sooner rather than later, as well as repairs to eroded areas of previously surfaced sections, along with continued work to control weed growth. This should not be an afterthought for whatever time DPW has left at the end of the warm weather season. It should be addressed when it does the most good for the town. Every day that passes exposes the town as being indifferent to its resources, rather than valuing those resources and their potential for the future.

Thank you for your attention to this issue.

The Members of the Thompson Trails Committee

Addenda 3

## TOWN *of* THOMPSON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

MUNICIPAL BUILDING 815 RIVERSIDE DRIVE • NO. GROSVENORDALE, CONNECTICUT 06255

TELEPHONE (860) 923-9475 • FAX (860) 923-9897

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Contact: Tyra Penn-Gesek, Director of Planning & Development, Town of Thompson 860-923-9475 x130**

[planner@thompsonct.org](mailto:planner@thompsonct.org)

### **The Great East Thompson Train Wreck Songwriting Competition goes “live” 6 June**

#### **A special event for a “Virtual” CT Trails Day**

#### **Sponsored by the Thompson Trails Committee & Thompson Historical Society**

As a part of an ongoing project with the National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program, the Town of Thompson recently sent out a call for singer-songwriters to compose a brand new song commemorating the events of the Great East Thompson Train Wreck, promoting CT Trails Day, and celebrating the Air Line State Park Trail. All of the submissions have been received, and coming up this weekend, you will have the chance to tune in and vote for your favorite!

In a pre-COVID-19 world, CT Trails Day 2020 was scheduled for Saturday 6 June; but, in order to stay consistent with social distancing requirements while still celebrating our trails, Thompson is having a Virtual CT Trails Day, instead. Starting on 6 June, a link will be posted on all of our online platforms (town website, social media, Instagram, etc), to Thompson’s Youtube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCg67evhE3c5likFChLUv3bQ>, with a way for viewers to send in their vote for their favorite song. The link to vote will be live through 26 June, and the winner will be announced on 30 June. In the event of a tie for first place, members of Thompson Historical Society and Thompson Trails Committee will act as the tiebreaker.

The winning songwriter will be awarded a professional studio recording at WICN Public Radio 90.5 FM in Worcester, MA, as well as an accompanying video produced by Thompson resident Geoff Bolte of Clarus Studios. The funding for the award is provided by the National Park Service Rails, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program, as a part of their ongoing partnership with Thompson Trails Committee for development of a trail action plan, which will include recommendations for development for the site of the Great East Thompson Train Wreck.

Once the link goes live, we hope you will share it far and wide! Please help us spread the word about Thompson’s CT gateway to the rest of the state’s length of the Air Line Trail; the unique historical event that took place there; and this fun way to share the experience of the trail safely from home.