

FRIENDS of MILITARY RIDGE TRAIL

Meeting Date: January 8, 2018

Meeting Location: Blue Mounds Park Shelter, Blue Mounds, WI

Friends Attending: Jerry Wilson, President; Sarah Castello, Secretary; Bill Kalscheur, Treasurer; Lydia Haynes; Palmer Haynes; Tom Pedretti; Dave Pearson; Brad Bates, DNR Ranger; Kevin Swenson, DNR Trail Manager; Linda McMeen

Minutes

Bill motioned and Lydia seconded to accept the November 2017 meeting minutes. The motion passed unanimously.

Financial Reports

The financial report showed we have \$18,274.98 in the FMRT checking account. Bill supplied a printout that showed a condensed version of debits and credits for the Friends in 2017. We pulled in 64,839 and spent 63,321 in 2017. Most of the income comes from trail passes. We have \$19,065 in the Fidelity account with a gain of \$6,565. Tamlyn Akins submitted a bill for the FMRT website domain name payment which will be paid in 2018. Palmer stated that the donation box at the depot is at their home. He will put it back in the depot in the spring. Dave motioned that we accept the financial report. The motion was seconded by Sarah. The motion passed unanimously.

Possible March meeting Agenda Item

Can we use the Friends to try and sell trail passes along the trail as Trail Tenders did in the past?

Additions to this meeting's agenda

Dave has information on the ATC power line opposition.

DNR Topics

Road work on old PB is back on the schedule. The roadwork will mean that the trail will be closed in this area and traffic rerouted through the park and ride.

The black top area of the trail, between the PB park-and-ride and the Cannon Ball Trail, has been plowed by a volunteer with an ATV. The DNR is not closing the gate on the trail

The snow mobile club Ridgeway Riders, after a reminder from Brad, stated that they put up the snow fence around the depot. Brad hasn't checked on this yet.

Kevin ordered trees for spring planting in 2018. He ordered \$500 worth of white spruce and the DNR plans to plant them in the area near Mt. Horeb that was heavily mowed (between the bridge and Waltz Park). When they mature they will improve the neighborhood by dampening the sound from snowmobilers. They need to be planted in about a 12 inch hole. They will use an auger to drill the holes. The DNR will plant them or else we can get volunteers. Kevin thought it would be hard to say how big they would get as it depends on the soil, how close bedrock is, moisture, etc. He chose the spruce because they are more aggressive and hopefully will compete with the buckthorn. He also wants to plant Indian grass and blue stem in front of the spruce.

The caboose doors (at the depot) are rotten. The DNR is trying to rebuild them.

Kevin asked about the signs along the trail that refer to an interpretive guide book developed by the Friends. Originally, the DNR's position, after the interpretive guidebook was developed, was that they did not want these signs along the trail because too many signs deterred from the "naturalness" of the trail. Kevin would like a copy of the guide book to revisit the idea and maybe modernize the trail guide book (a phone app, a swipe option, something linked to our website). We will need to check the text of the guide to see if points of interest are still there (ex. stands of unique vegetation). This may be a project for the future.

Not many stewardship grants were submitted to the DNR so we were able to ask for more money. The new grant request now includes signage for Riley and the higher priced maps. We will get a bid for the map and

sign prices after we find out how much money we get through the stewardship grant. Then we can see how many maps we can purchase.

The Ridgeway highway project is still progressing.

There is no new information on the Duluth Trading Company incursions into the trail in downtown Mt. Horeb.

Verona is building a new high school near 18/151 (on the west side of Verona) which will impinge on the trail.

The new site design includes a 70 foot box culvert which will go over the trail and several bicycle grade intersections. Contractors are requesting a 30 day closure of the trail during the summer of 2018. Due to liability issues the DNR is not going to suggest a re-route but will ask the contractor to suggest a re-route. The total building project will include getting rid of two bridges (both replaced by box culverts) and will result in the high school for a trail neighbor.

Brad said that during a trail bridge inspection they saw a covey of bobwhite just off the trail.

ATC Power Line

Dave reported that the ATC opposition group wants to do a media blitz, starting February 2nd, to bring attention to the proposed power line. The group needs to raise money to do the media blitz. Dave asked if the FMRT could give money to support this media blitz. Jerry suggested that we might need legal advice. Can the FMRT give money to this group or is this a political issue? Bill felt it was not a political issue. Kevin thought Jerry should contact the liaisons for the DNR friends groups or contact the state wide chapter of the Friends to determine what we can do. Depending on the allowability, Palmer motioned that we donate \$100 to the blitz cause, Bill seconded it. The motion passed unanimously. A rally is planned by the opposition group for January 26 in Iowa County to encourage opposition to the trail. Bill asked if the final route has been published. The answer is no.

Etching framing

The picture donated by Melva is framed. Linda brought it to the meeting to show the group.

Work Day

The work day was well attended. Friends suggested that our next work day could include clearing the other side of the trail (between Sletto Road and County P on the south side of the trail). The big sprayers owned by the Friends did not work. The little hand held sprayers did work and were easier to use. Tom Meyer is looking into more sprayers. DuMont Smith, a friend of Lydia and Palmers, was a welcome and hard-working addition to the group. He regularly chain saws with the Friends of Donald Park.

Long term trail plan and maintenance

Brad will write up something to put on the website to explain why the DNR is cutting back trees on the sides of the trail. The text will explain the DNR's long term plan for trail maintenance. Friends will review/edit the text and post it on the website. This text can be referred to by Friends when people express concern about the cutting done along the trail.

Chain saw certification

Rich Castello needs to complete and return to the DNR several forms and file copies of his chain saw and first aid certification with the DNR.

Annual Meeting

Our next meeting (February), is our annual meeting and will be held at the Blue Mounds Park Shelter. All the officers currently with positions are willing to keep serving. Dave Pearson agreed to fill the role of vice president. This is a potluck. We will advertise in the papers that this is our annual meeting and will include the monthly meeting.

March 13 (this is a Tuesday) the building (Blue Mounds Shelter) will be used for the District Friends meeting. The DNR people were not sure who could attend.

The next meeting is 6:00 pm, Monday, February 12, 2018 at the Blue Mounds Park Shelter.

Respectfully submitted,
Sarah Castello, Secretary

FRIENDS of the MILITARY RIDGE TRAIL

Meeting Date: February 13, 2018

Meeting Location: Blue Mounds Park Shelter, Blue Mounds, WI

Friends Attending: Jerry Wilson, President; Sarah Castello, Secretary; Bill Kalscheur, Treasurer; Lydia Haynes; Palmer Haynes; Tom Pedretti; Dave Pearson; Kevin Swenson, DNR Trail Manager; Linda McMeen

The February meeting consisted of the Annual Meeting (mandated by our by-laws) combined with the Friends Monthly Meeting.

There were no new attendees.

The officers for the following year will be: Jerry Wilson, President; Dave Pearson, Vice President (new officer); Sarah Castello, Secretary; Bill Kalscheur, Treasurer. Bill motioned that we accept the proposed officers, the motion was seconded by Lydia, and passed unanimously.

Melva Philips asked that we send the minutes to the Iowa County Historical Society, and to acknowledge them as the donators of the locomotive painting.

Jerry would like the minutes to be on our website.

Minutes

Dave motioned that the minutes be accepted with the correction that the picture was donated by the Iowa County Historical Society (not Melva Philips). Jerry seconded to accept the January 2018 meeting minutes after they are amended. The motion passed unanimously.

Financial Reports

The financial report shows that we have \$18,270.21 in the FMRT checking account. A few brick orders came in. Sarah motioned to accept the financial report, Dave seconded the motion, the motion passed unanimously.

Additions to this meetings agenda

There were no additions to the agenda. Dave motioned and Bill seconded to accept the agenda as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

DNR Topics

- Brad has finished a draft on the interpretive panels to be mounted at Riley but he could not be at the meeting. He may send the draft out to members.
- The Regional Friends of the Wisconsin State Park System Meeting, which includes friends of Trails, Parks, Recreational Areas, etc, is taking place at the Blue Mounds State Park Shelter March 13, from 6-8. Those wishing to attend can sign up on-line but Kevin thought if you didn't sign up you could probably just show up. Kevin thought the meeting would be well attended. The meeting will include Friends as well as DNR representatives. The meeting will include discussion of cost saving opportunities.
- Kevin wants to take the interpretive language from the trail guide developed in the past, have it digitized, and then upload it to our website. The information could then be accessed via users phones through signs along the trails. The guide may have been developed by the DNR and have a DNR publication number which may make it easier for Kevin to digitize. Lydia will need assistance in uploading it on the website and linking it to the signs on the trail.
- The Verona School District Project is ongoing.
- The Duluth Trading Company fence (across from the 2nd Street Shelter) has encroached on the trail. The fence may have been pushed back by the snow mobile groomer.
- Kevin will talk to Mt Horeb city planners about the proposal to develop the areas between the Duluth Trading Company and the Food Emporium. Bill thought they were not aware that this was state DNR property.

ATC Power Line

Dave Pearson reported the following:

- Some thought there was no limitation on 501C3 involvement in protecting the driftless area.

- Opposition groups felt that the power line was an unneeded boondoggle; environmentally destructive; much too expensive; hurt property values and the economy; and that there were better, cleaner, cheaper, job-creating alternatives to the line. Because electrical usage is more efficient there is less need for the transmission line.
 - In August a rural environmental group is going to develop an impact statement.
 - The proposed media blitz will now take place in the spring. The group felt that the winter was not the time to do it.
 - FMRT has not yet written the \$100 check to support the media blitz.
- County and townships groups (including the Mt Horeb School District) are forming opposition groups and publishing opposition statements.
- Kevin pointed out that Janet (from the DNR) felt that the FMRT was closely aligned with the DNR and since the DNR couldn't take a stand on the power line the FMRT also should not take a stand. Discussion followed about giving money to support the media blitz. Bill felt that it was supporting the aesthetics of the trail and therefore under the purview of the Friends. Lydia felt it was a such a small amount of money that the donation would not violate any prohibitions on 501C(3) funding of such an action. Jerry felt that that we should not do what the DNR could not do.

Work Day

- Tom Meyers would like to schedule another work day (which will be another vista opening) for either March 24 or March 31. Jerry can not make the 24th. Members should get back to Jerry as soon as possible about their preferred date. Sarah will ask her husband and Lydia and Palmer will ask Dumont Schmidt about their availability to lend a hand chain sawing on either of those dates. Bill will ask Cletus and Jane if they can come for the work day.

The next meeting will be 6:00 pm, March 21, 2018 at the Blue Mounds Shelter.

Respectfully submitted,
Sarah Castello, Secretary

FRIENDS of the MILITARY RIDGE TRAIL

Meeting Date: March 12, 2018

Meeting Location: Blue Mounds Park Shelter, Blue Mounds, WI

Friends Attending: Jerry Wilson, President; Dave Pearson, Vice President; Sarah Castello, Secretary; Bill Kalscheur, Treasurer; Lydia Haynes; Palmer Haynes; Tom Pedretti; Kevin Swenson, DNR Trail and Park Manager; Brad Bates, DNR Ranger and Assistant Trail Manager; Barb Schmidt, DuMont Schmidt

Annual Report

The group discussed liquid and non liquid assets. Bill motioned, Dave seconded, and it passed unanimously that we donate the mower to the DNR. The mower therefore would not be considered an asset for the FMRT.

Minutes

Bill motioned that the minutes be accepted. Dave seconded to accept the February 2018 meeting minutes. The motion passed unanimously.

Financial Reports

The financial report shows that we have \$18,121 in the FMRT checking account. Expenditures this month include: web hosting fee, chain saw repair, and the Ridgeway utility bill. Tamlyn wants us to pay for the web hosting through a credit or debit card. Bill will get a debit card through Farmers Bank in Mt. Horeb. We sold some trail passes last month. Dave motioned to accept the financial report, Palmer seconded the motion, the motion passed unanimously.

Additions to this meeting's agenda

DuMont wanted to add a discussion of trail conditions in the Blue Mounds area to the agenda.

Regional Friends Meeting

Bill will be attending the Regional Friends of the Wisconsin State Park System Meeting on Wednesday and Jerry on Thursday.

DNR Topics

Interpretive panels - Brad has been working on interpretive panels for Riley deck and will send out pdfs of drafts. There are 6 panels and Brad treated them as pairs with 3 topics having 2 panels each. The three topics include: 1. Frogs and toads of the Sugar River (these panels will be linked to a DNR webpage on frogs and toads via interactive QR codes and allow the user to hear frog and toad vocalizations); 2. Trail to Road and Back to Trail again (these panels include a timeline of the trail's use from footpath to today's recreational trail) 3. Journey to the Sea (these panels talk about the watershed the trail passes through). There was a discussion of where topics 2. and 3. QR codes could link to. Suggestions include having the watershed panels link to the Sugar River watershed group website and the Trail to Recreational and Back to Trail QR code link to the Historical Society or to a map.

Trail guide- the DNR would like to put QR codes on sign posts along the trail. These QR codes would link you to points of interest in the trail guide. Kevin plans to recreate the trail guide digitally and use the QR codes posted on the trail to link to the Trail Guide on the FMRT website. Brad needs a copy of the trail guide and Jerry has a copy that can be recreated digitally.

MRT has been selected to have a digital kiosk. The kiosk can be used to buy trail passes, park passes (daily, annual), allow for payment via credit card, and will print a receipt. The first kiosk will be located at the Verona trail head in summer and moved to Blue Mounds in the fall to accommodate park skiers. The kiosks are solar powered and have no cash inside. It will be installed by Memorial Day and will be security bolted to the concrete.

Projects on the trail include:

- Work in Verona by the PB park and ride is moving forward.
- Verona School project will begin this year resulting in the trail shut down for at least a week.
- The Duluth trading company construction site is still impacting the trail in Mt Horeb.
- In Ridgeway the trail will be shut down for a month due to new exit ramps.
- The Mt Horeb bridge painting was rebid and awarded, and painting will take place this summer.
- Finks will work on 2017 storm damage to the trail west of Blue Mounds.

-Kevin got lots of positive feedback about the plowing of the trail from Verona to Capital City trail.

Brad has worked on the model train he donated, He repaired the locomotive and repainted it green and gold. Brad would like to make a display table for the train set. We will decide at the next meeting where to put the table. One suggestion was in the corner of the back room.

-It is the snow mobile clubs responsibility to take down the fence around the depot.

-Brad would like to add for next month's agenda having Bill talk about the The Regional Friends of the Wisconsin State Park System Meeting.

Trail Conditions in Blue Mounds

DuMont wants to discuss a section of the trail near Red Wolf and the new concrete bridges in Blue Mounds. There is lots of activity on the trail here and the sides of the trail have lots of ragweed, trashy looking willow trees, garlic mustard, and burdock. Brad said that the DNR typically does normal maintenance of trail annually, including mowing on the side of trail, trimming problem limbs on the side of trail, and, where there are noxious weeds, the DNR uses a tractor with a boom and selects (usually in the fall) sections of the trail to clear. Volunteers, including businesses, villages, adopt a trail groups, and private citizens can clean up a section of the trail. Reseeding can only include native plants. Brad pointed out that it is hard to decide when to cut out invasive species because native plants that are flowering at the time could also be eliminated.

ATC Power Line

An ATC updated map and has a preferred route which runs along highway 18-151 and affects the trail corridor from Governor Dodge going east all the way to Mt. Horeb. The route then cuts through the north east end of Mt Horeb. The ATC announced that they intended to move up their application date to mid-April although they won't have all necessary documentation until August. Opposition groups think that this not a real application (without all the documentation) but is intended to make the public think that the application has already been submitted and it will therefore be useless for people to continue opposing the trail.

Calendar

-Lydia has the Calendar to post in the kiosks and online. Jerry would like to add the Feb 12 annual meeting (so people know we had it).

- This spring the Hyde mill and Hyde black smith shop will be open and the school would like to bring kids to the depot.. Wed, May 16, is the day for setup (they will be setting up teepees and more.). Students from the Dodgeville school system would like to visit the depot May 18th (Jerry requested that we not put this on the calendar yet). Bill, Palmer, and maybe Dave will be there to help. The kids really liked the caboos last time.

-Meg is still willing to take people out on the trail. If people contact her she will make arrangements to meet with them. Lydia and Palmer will sub for Meg if necessary.

Work Day

The next work day is March 24th and continues the vista clearing east of Sletto to Highway P. Friends should meet at 9:00 on highway P. Palmer wants to add a fall workday to the schedule.

Bike Rodeo

Sarah has contacted Mt Horeb Scoot Troop #62 to see if we can help with the Bike Rodeo, an annual event that teaches bike safety to children. Participates are provided with free bike helmets. Dave motioned that we authorize \$250 to put toward helmets for the rodeo, Bill seconded it, and the motion passed unanimously to authorize up to \$250 for helmets for the bike rodeo in Mt. Horeb. Sarah will take the lead on this.

File purging

Jerry and Bill will take a day to clear out the files in the depot.

Next Meeting

Dave motioned and Lydia seconded to move the meeting to the depot in April. April and May will be depot clean up days so show up early if you can to work. The next meeting will be 6:00 pm, April 9, 2018 at the Ridgeway Depot. Bill will have the water turned on at the depot.

Respectfully submitted,
Sarah Castello, Secretary