

Minutes - FRIENDS of MILITARY RIDGE TRAIL

Meeting Date: January 11, 2021

Meeting Location: Zoom Meeting

Friends attending: Jerry Wilson, President; Dave Pearson, Vice President; Sarah Castello, Secretary; Bill Kalscheur, Treasurer; Linda McMeen; Lydia Haynes; Kevin Svenson, DNR; Brad Bates, DNR

Minutes

Dave motioned and Bill seconded to accept the November 2020 meeting minutes. The motion passed unanimously.

Financial Reports

The financial report showed an end of December 2020 balance of \$30,365.86 in the Farmers Savings Bank account. The Fidelity Account, as of 12/31/2020, has \$29,179.06. Bike passes have been distributed. Bike pass sales were down about 9 1/2% over last year. All trail pass money has been collected for 2020 and the DNR paid. 2021 Trail passes are out and selling. Dave suggested that we ask Bruce Pauli about the monthly Ridgeway utility bill for the depot (utilities are paid throughout the year because the cost of disconnecting and reconnecting is so high). Dave motioned that we accept the treasurer's report, Linda seconded the motion, the motion passed unanimously.

Additions to this meetings agenda

None

DNR Topics

The Fitchrona bridge is done and redecked.

Paving the section of trail through Verona, from Highway PB to the school (about 1 and 1/2 mile) - one of the hurdles to paving has been achieved. Snowmobilers need a place to park with access to the trail. Verona is allowing them to park and the village is talking about building a parking lot for the snowmobiles on the school grounds. The DNR thinks the Verona School District is willing to do this so it would be more likely that the trail could be paved. The City of Verona is going to pay for the paving and engineer it. The paving project would include paving the bridges in town. Epic paid for their own trail through Verona which runs from the trail to Epic. The village will most likely not allow snowmobiles on the portion to be paved.

Update on the master plan for the MRT (the MRT is included in the SW Savannah Grassland Geographic Area) - The DNR hopes to get the updated Master Plan out for public review sometime in January. Kevin thinks the review will be a zoom meeting. This Master Plan Incorporates several properties in one geographic area (the SW Savannah Grassland Geographic Area). Kevin will send a link to everyone. There will probably will be a 30 day period for comment and then they will open it for a virtual public meeting.

The DNR thinks the observation platform currently near Riley extends into private property. Bill is going to check with past FMRT members about this. Bill thinks it might be on MRT property (property lines are hard to interpret). The observation deck that was torn down was partially on on private property. We had permission from the landowner to put it there. When he died and the grandson took over property, the grandson did not want it on the property and it was taken down.

Tress have not been ordered yet by the DNR. Kevin will keep us posted on if he needs money for the purchase or help in planting.

Trees have been planted around the new kiosk, 5 Black Hills Blue spruce which will act as a buffer from 18-151 and general Beverage.

Tree Project as memorial for Palmer

Mound View Garden Club wants to plant a tree this spring along the trail as a memorial to Palmer. Jeff Gorman will make suggestions on the location. Lydia had suggested a ginkgo but the garden club said they were too expensive. Lydia will keep us posted.

Bird Watching Platform

Lydia and Sarah suggested a new bird watching platform along the side of the trail, near Riley, as another memorial to Palmer. The DNR is not opposed to it. They want to discuss it more and get an idea for a location pinned down. The DNR owns some property 500 feet from County Road J, heading east on the

north side of the trail. The swath is about 125 feet wide and doesn't go past the bridge. The swath is about as long as the woodland on the south side and about 100 feet long. Kevin suggested this as a possible location of the proposed platform. Meg Skinner has suggested somewhere near the turtle pond. Whatever we construct can't interfere with biking, grooming, and snowmobiling. Jerry suggested we wait until spring to decide on a site and plan the structure, then we can all go out there together and have a meeting (May or June) on this portion of the trail and look at the spot. Kevin suggested an elevated platform that goes into the wetland. Dave suggested a bench and railing that is lower for handicapped and children to use. We briefly talked about funding. The Knowles-Nelson stewardship money ran out but there is a proposal in the senate to renew it.

ATC

The 7th Circuit Court of Appeals' recent ruling putting a hold on the appeal by the Driftless Defenders thereby enables the ATC to move ahead with the construction of the towers across the Driftless Area. Dave said there are also plans to put wind turbines along stretches of the trail.

MRT Award

Jerry's interview about FMRT Friends award will be in the Fitchburg Star.

Next Meeting is our Annual Meeting

The next meeting will be February 8, 2021 via zoom. Dave Pearson will send out an invitation and open the meeting at 5:15. Come to the meeting with any new project ideas you may have.

Respectfully submitted,
Sarah Castello, Secretary