

FRIENDS of MILITARY RIDGE TRAIL

Meeting Date: August 8, 2016

Meeting Location: Train Depot, Ridgeway

Friends Attending: Gerry Wilson, President; Cletus Schwoerer, Vice President; Sarah Castello, Secretary; Lydia Haynes; Palmer Haynes; Jane Schwoerer; Tom Pedretti; Dave Pearson; Cletus Schwoerer; Kevin Swenson, DNR Trail Manager; Keith Sincox (Past President); Brad Bates; DNR Assistant Trail Manager; Mary Kay Baum

Minutes: Dave motioned and Cletus seconded to accept the minutes as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

Financial reports: FMRT have \$20,693 in the bank as of the end of July. Trail passes are coming in at a good rate. Website costs and port-a-potty at Riley are listed in the financial report in the miscellaneous category. Dave suggested the cost for the port-a-potty be broken out into its own category on the expense report. Lydia will name the category. The contractor has been paid for the kiosk in Dodgeville. Keith motioned and Dave seconded to accept the financial report. The motion was passed unanimously.

Ridgeway Open House: On Sunday there were lots of visitors to the Ridgeway depot. Faye Glonek donated her dad's NorthWestern Railway rag and NorthWestern women's club pin for the display cases.

Bruce and Donna Paul want to donate cups and saucers to sell to raise money for the FMRT. They also mentioned that they have a group of 4th graders that they would like to bring to the depot for a tour. The tour would be in conjunction with a trip to the the blacksmith at Hyde. This would be in September.

We also had a visit from the couple who run the Shullsburg Badger Mining Museum, a hand dug lead mine. There was discussion about advertising this museum on the website. Jane will check to see if this is a for or not-for-profit enterprise.

DNR Topics:

- The trail sustained more extensive damage from July storms. DNR rented a skid steer and reshaped areas of the trail in Dodgeville, Mt. Horeb, Verona, and Barneveld so storm run off will not continue to erode the trail. DNR staff have spent so much time rolling and grading the trail to remedy storm damage that they have had little time for normal annual general maintenance (brush mowing, etc). The DNR contracted with Finks to regrade the area of trail east of Town Hall Road. Kevin said there have been a record number of complaints about the trail condition. Palmer suggested putting a statement on the website and the kiosks about the trail problems due to storm damage, stress that people are working on the trail, and list a phone number that users could call to alert the DNR to trail problems. Brad would like the statement to list (and uses to call) the Blue Mounds State Park phone number. The statement would acknowledge the problems, give trail users a constructive way to address the problems, and emphasize that the DNR is aware of and working on trail problems.
- There is no new information on brush mower replacement options.

Kevin still needs to send to FMRT the DNR volunteer forms. Cletus got completed emergency forms from FMRT volunteers who worked on the trail today.

- Special Events are still happening on the trail despite some of the problems with the trail.

Ridgeway Pine Relict: Mary Kay Baum, leader of the recently formed Ridgeway Pines Relict friends group, presented information on the Ridgeway Pine Relict State Natural Area which is located north of Ridgeway. The area is 600 acres of restored prairie and very unique pine relict. These pines, which are descendants of the trees that covered the area after the ice age, have survived fires and logging due to the surrounding rock formations. The area is now the best example of pine relict in the midwest. The pine relict is a mixture of both northern alpine plants and native southern Wisconsin plants. Both the village of Ridgeway and the township are in favor of promoting this area.

From the parking lot on Ridgevue Road visitors can see and access the restored prairie. The Ridgevue Road access does not allow for easy access to the pine relict and is used mostly by the prairie restorationists, visitors to the prairie, and hunters. Bikers and hikers can access the pine relict from Highway H. This access does not have a parking lot but does have signage and allows for access to three trails which are marked by blue ribbons. Parking on the side of Highway H was discussed. Keith expressed concerns about cars parking on the roadside causing problems for farm vehicles.

Mary Kay would like to: mount a photo exhibit of the Pine Relict in the Ridgeway Depot; have the DNR provide information about the Pine Relict in the next brochure; and for the FMRT website to have information on the Relict. She would also like a sign on Highway H to identify the area and list permitted uses (no motorized vehicle, hiking allowed, etc.). This would most likely be the purview of the DNR.

The group would like her to display the photos on a sign board in the freight room, and with the photos some text to explain how to access the property.

Dave moved to permit a photo display of the pine relict on a board in the ticket room, before the Sunday Ridgeway parade and to revisit the subject in September after the display is up, Keith seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. Dave will work with Mary Kay to open the depot so that she is able to mount the display. The web group will provide Mary Kay with text on the Pine Relict to edit and then add this to the website page that has trail descriptions.

Work Day: Work done on the Verona PB work and ride (August 8) included: picnic table stained, lilacs trimmed, some weeding, and work on the stump, which members were not able to remove. Cletus will call Verona to let them know about the pile of branches/weeds near the parking lot which needs to be removed.

The next Monday work day (Aug 15th) is cancelled. September 12 (day of the meeting) is the next workday. Cletus will send an email with the location to meeting and tasks.

Summer Ice Cream Social: - The event on July 24 raised about \$200 and and resulted in a few people signing up. The event was not as well attended as last year.

Memorial: Dave Pearson brought up what the group could do to honor Vicky Kalscheur's passing. Information about donations/flowers/services will be sent out by Jerry and Lydia/Palmer.

Milkweed Planting at Mt Horeb Comfort Station: Tom would like to collect seeds from his perennial gardens and plant them in one of the former flower beds at the Mt Horeb 2nd Street comfort station. These flower beds were formerly tended by Palmer and became over run with cotton wood seedlings. The beds are now mowed by the village staff. These beds are not looked after by the DNR. Brad suggested Tom contact the Mound Vue Garden Club to see what is going on with the beds, and also contact the village to see if it is permissible to plant the milkweed seeds (and maybe other butterfly favored plants) in the bed and to let them know about the planting so the bed would not be mowed or sprayed. Tom was advised to contact Laurel Grindle, Village Public Works Director.

Dave moved to adjourn the meeting, Jane seconded, and the motion was passed unanimously.

The next meeting is September 12 at the Ridgeway Depot.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah Castello, Secretary