

Franklin Township Trails Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, January 13th, 2016

1. Call to order in accordance with the Sunshine Law provision: Meeting called to order at 7:04 p.m.
2. Introduction/roll call: Present – Nancy Cole, Jack Connolly, Vanessa Jones, Philip Kramer, Jim Kuligowski, Dana Oley, Anne-Marie Orlusky, Fran Varacalli.
Excused – Mark Fortin, Pat Leonard
3. Reorganization of Committee: Varacalli opened the meeting and asked for nominations for committee chairperson. Kuligowski nominated Nancy Cole with Oley seconding the motion. No other nominations were made. Cole accepted the nomination and the motion passed unanimously. Cole nominated Kuligowski for vice-chairperson with Orlusky seconding the nomination. No other nominations were made. Kuligowski accepted the nomination and the motion passed unanimously.

Cole took over chairing the meeting.
4. 2016 Meeting Dates Approval. March Meeting: Varacalli distributed a tentative 2016 meeting schedule with the following semi-monthly meeting dates: January 13th, March 9th, May 11th, July 13th, September 14th and November 9th. Due to Varacalli's unavailability for March 9th the committee agreed to move the March 9th meeting date to March 23rd.
5. Approval of the November 18th, 2015 minutes: Kuligowski made a motion to approve the minutes with Orlusky seconding the motion. All members in favor. The motion passed unanimously.
6. Opening of the meeting to the public: Orlusky made a motion to opening the meeting to the public with Connolly seconding. All members in favor. Motion passed.

Ken Carmichel of 1651 Amwell Road, Somerset was there to tell the committee that his wife, Monica, is interested in becoming a committee member if there are any openings. They have lived in town for seven years and Monica is a horticulturalist at Rutgers University with a degree in plant science. They were also caretakers of the Van Wickle house. Varacalli told Carmichel how to apply for township volunteer positions by filling out the application found on the township website and submitting to the town clerk. Varacalli also offered to email the form.

Connolly made a motion to close the meeting to the public with Oley seconding. All members in favor. The motion passed.

7. New business:

a. Committee Goals 2016-Capital Projects:

Goals include continuing promoting the trails through the photo contest, calendar, hosting National Trails Day and increasing scheduled committee walks including trail maintenance.

Capital Projects: The Township has applied for a NJ DEP Recreational Trails grant to create a paved path as a connector for the North-South trail. This connector would start on Van Cleef Road to Six-Mile Run. The Town has not received communication about whether the grant was awarded. The cost of the project is expected to run between \$90-100K. The township has been working with the State of NJ Dept. of Parks to gain their approval to allow the Township to build the portion of the North-South Trail through Six Mile Run State Park.

The issue of bike routes and signs is with the Township Manager who is getting input from Public Safety which is holding their next meeting on February 9th. Varacalli to send Kramer and Vornlocker (Township Manager) the information she has.

There is a proposed project to connect the Canal Walk community to Colonial Park with a

sidewalk running from the intersection of Weston Road and Metlars Road to Colonial Park. Varacalli said the county is willing to engineer the project but the Township is responsible for the cost of the project. Kramer believes that this is a county road and not a Township road so the county would be responsible for picking up the cost.

The project of caution signs where South Middlebush Road crosses the Six Mile Run trail remains open. This is a county road and one of the issues deals with lack of sightlines. Lastly, Varacalli will email committee members for any suggestions regarding any other trail plans.

b. Canal Walk and Roll 2016 dates? Kramer would like to continue the event. He suggests 2-4 more over the road banners to better promote the event. Varacalli to get with Kramer to work on verbiage on the banners. Dates selected are Sunday, May 15th with a rain date of the 22nd and either September 18th with a rain date of September 25th. Time of event is 10am-4pm. Canal Road closed from East Millstone to Butler Road to traffic other than local traffic.

c. Other ways to promote trails in the township to residents: Current promotions include setting up information tables at soccer fields, Franklin Day and Canalfest. New promotions include setting up an information exhibit at both Franklin libraries, leaving trail maps at the Community/Senior Center, putting a poster at the Villagers Theater and perhaps a joint meeting with the Advisory Board of Health for suggestions on getting people active. Giving flyers to the schools was suggested but this entails getting BOE approval and counting out specific flyer numbers for each classroom.

Vanessa suggested connecting Franklin activities with surrounding towns and leading walks by committee members. Varacalli mentioned there is a liability issue without a Township representative present.

There is an interactive park and open space map on the Township website. Varacalli to check with the Township IT person to create this map for a mobile app.

Oley mentioned people hike for two reasons: Either for nature or for health. She suggested more organized walks with no nature theme. Varacalli will check with the Audubon Society as they host nature related hikes at negligible cost.

d. NJ Trails Organization-D&R Greenway: There is a grant to set up a website with all local trails around the D&R Greenway area. No Franklin trails are listed except for Six Mile Run. Can Franklin trails be included or can there be a link to the Township website?

e. Eco-Tourism Itineraries: It was decided that committee members keep their trail assignments from 2015. ACTION ITEM: Given that members keep their trails from 2015, members are requested to submit one and two day eco-tour itineraries to committee members for their trail by FEBRUARY 17th. This includes visiting any other Franklin sites for historic, dining, horse riding or any other activity that can be imagined.

8. Old business:

a. January Trail Committee Walk-Bunker Hill Jan. 23rd or 30th?

The 30th was chosen. Time is from 9:30-11:30 a.m. Varacalli to email committee members.

b. Travel web sites – reviews: Varacalli added Griggstown to the Trip Advisor website.

ACTION ITEM: Committee members are asked to set up their trail on the Trip Advisor website if they have not yet done so.

c. National Trails Day, Saturday, June 4th 2016: Connolly made a motion and Oley seconded to hold this event at Middlebush Park this year if the trail markings are complete. The motion passed. Some of the events that will be looked into booking are “Walk With a Doc” hosted by Phil Kramer, an information table from Robert Wood

Hospital (Varacalli to contact) and last years “hula-hoop” lady (Cole to contact). Kuligowski noted that soccer games might be running on this date which would make for a large crowd of kids and parents. Soccer games run at 9:00 and 10:45 so an overlap between these times would generate the most number of visitors. It would also be advantageous to set up near the soccer fields to generate the most interest.

- d. National Park Service, Every kid in a park-update: The idea to set up a system for grade schoolers to visit the local trails would like to be set up by National Trails Day (June 4th) so the children have the summer to visit the trails. The idea is to set up sites (trail marker poles) on each trail for youths to reach and record their visit. This can be done by scanning a QR code and submitting by email or mail. Rewards suggested could be path tags, certificates, adding kid’s photos for one month of the calendar and/or recognition at a council meeting.
- e. Video Cameras on trails – update: Alice Ospowitz from Recreation and Varacalli representing Open Space have requested setting up surveillance cameras in parks and on trailheads to reduce vandalism. The Township IT person wants to use the same system that is currently in place in the Hamilton Street area.
- f. Trail Maintenance – updates: The Public Works department did trail maintenance work around Thanksgiving. They are scheduled to go back on the trails in the March/April timeframe depending on ground conditions.
Jones mentioned there was an abandoned couch on the Bunkerhill brown trail and it should be removed before ground cover makes it difficult to reach.
- g. Trail Vandalism – updates: There was an increase in vandalism in 2015 at the Butler Road and Griggstown trails parking areas.

9. Reports from other Committees: No reports.

10. Announcements: Woodcock walks are scheduled at Negri-Nepote Native Grassland Preserve on Friday March 18th and April 1st at 7:00 p.m.

11. Adjournment: Connolly made a motion and Orlusky seconded to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed and the meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Submitted by Jim Kuligowski