

APPROVED MINUTES

Town of Concord
Estabrook Access Study Committee
Meeting
July 21, 2016
141 Keyes Road

Members Present: Sally Schnitzer
Polly Reeve
Neil Rasmussen
Peter Siebert
Justin King
Jeff Adams
Bonnie Pohlig
Kathy Angell
Lisa Pohl

Also Present: Jane Hotchkiss, Select Board liaison
Nick D'Arbeloff (Carlisle liaison, non-voting)

Public Present: David Santomenna, Trustees of Reservations
Marcie Berkley
Katie Pohlig

Polly Reeve called the meeting to order at 7 am.

1. **Review and approval of minutes for July 7 meeting**

The minutes from the Committee's meeting of July 7, 2016 were discussed. It was moved and seconded that the minutes be approved as written. The motion passed unanimously.

2. **Correspondence**

No new emails or letters were received since the last meeting.

3. **Administrative Matters**

Polly noted that the Guest Commentary was in the Concord Journal. Nick reported that the Commentary was submitted to the Carlisle Mosquito but has not yet been published.

Neil found an article by Steven Ells published in Fall 1996 by the Thoreau Society, volume 4 entitled Henry Thoreau and the Estabrook Country: A Historic and Personal Landscape. A PDF of the article was sent to all members and a copy will be included in the Committee file.

4. **Parking**

Jeff, Lisa and Peter are working to pull together information about currently available parking spaces at various access points. Jeff has been in touch with the DPW for technical assistance. He is hopeful that we will have parking space numbers by August 4. This should include current capacity, issues with boulders, trees, poles, and other comments. A question was raised about whether we can better understand the dimensions of the Town owned Right of Way, as well. Jeff noted that this is sometimes difficult to pin down. There were also questions about regulations regarding parking on Town roads in places where there is no explicit “no parking” signage. Jeff will ask for clarification. Kathy Angell asked if the DPW could look at whether there is room for more parking further down Estabrook Road. Neil Rasmussen stated that abutters oppose additional parking on the street and would terminate permission for the public to pass over the access to the Woods if there is any new parking created, including lifting of the temporary no-parking ban.

Polly noted that Delia Kaye, Director of the Natural Resources department of the Town of Concord, has provided a list of Town-owned conservation properties and the status of existing parking at each. This information may be helpful to us as we consider how much parking should be provided for Estabrook Woods.

5. **Codes of Conduct**

Neil, Polly, and Nick have been researching codes of conduct/rules and regulation/signage at other trails, and will be putting together a draft of ideas for the consideration of the Committee. The goal is to suggest a common set of practices and messages throughout the Woods for all owners, and to harmonize the signage.

One suggestion was to return to a phrase that was used in the 1990’s campaign for the Woods: “Honor Estabrook Woods.” Nick noted that there were several different categories of messages that we might want to get across -- some are more immediate to visitors than others. Signage should be thoughtfully designed,

written, and posted to focus on the most important issues. At the parking areas, signage might be needed to aid with parking and to set expectations for behavior for dogs. Once on the trail or at a kiosk, there could be more information to explain about rules of conduct for being in the Woods (examples; no motorized vehicles, no fires, etc.) and to inform people about the unique nature of the Woods. It was noted that many of the most complicated issues deal with dogs. Kathy Angell took some photos of signs from Alaska that were distributed to committee members before the meeting. The Committee discussed the general idea of requiring dogs on a leash at parking areas and for some distance down the trail, and then further on, having a sign that says dogs can be off leash but must meet Town requirements to be under command of owner. This approach is used in several parks in nearby Towns.

The issue of dog waste was discussed. This issue has been studied in other locations across the country. Enforcement of dog waste proper disposal can be difficult. Some areas provide a barrel and mitt dispenser for dog waste but in our situation, who would pay for this, and who would dump the barrels? The Estabrook Woods is not in a single ownership. The health and environmental impacts of dog wastes have been studied – worst impact is usually concentrated in the first section of a trail.

David Santomenna stated that the Trustees of Reservations have worked on this issue on some of their properties. When TTOR provides mitt dispensers and barrels, they assign staff to refill and empty them. It was argued that perhaps a better approach in our case (where there is no common ownership or single manager) might be to seek a culture of expectations and code of conduct. Jane Hotchkiss suggested the concept: “Leave the Woods cleaner than you found them”

While discussing signage, the issue of trail markings was briefly discussed. There are different approaches in different parts of the Woods.

6. **Access Points**

Neil and Peter distributed a draft categorization of access points in Concord and Carlisle, based on our discussions back in June. The Committee discussed these, including the use of the term “neighborhood access” where parking is not possible. Nick will check with Carlisle regarding how to present information for access points on the Carlisle side of the town line.

7. **List of citizen comments/solutions**

Sally has been preparing a list of suggestions made by citizens via email or at the public hearing. She will try to complete and send out prior to the next meeting.

8. **How do we approach the question of “how much parking” and where?**

Polly asked the Committee to think about how we want to approach this question. As an abutter, Neil has been making some observations of parking patterns near his property on Estabrook Road using a video camera. He presented some observations and suggests that spring and fall are the busiest times, with winter (cross country skiing) providing some of the highest peak days. He suggests that approximately 10 visitors per day per space is the observed effective capacity of the parking area on Estabrook Road. By extrapolating from that, he thinks the maximum number of visitors entering the woods after parking at Punkatasset, Chamberlin Woods, and Estabrook Road is around 450 visitors per day. More would be entering at access points in Carlisle. The Committee noted that there is a difference between the “carrying capacity of the Woods” (the amount of use the Woods can tolerate without degradation) and the “capacity of parking” (how many visitors park and enter the woods). It was noted that an unknown number of visitors enter the Woods from neighborhoods or back yards, on bicycles or horses, or by walking to the access points. Justin pointed out that due to the temporary No Parking ban on Estabrook Road, there has been a net loss of parking spaces over the last six months. He estimated the loss in parking spaces to be approximately 40 cars, mostly used during the peak days. (DPW estimates of parking will assist us in all of this discussion).

As the meeting came to a close, each member gave a quick reaction as to whether he or she would want to see an increase, decrease, or stasis in the number of parking spaces presently available for access to the Woods. Nick’s feeling was to have parking availability roughly the same until Harvard or Middlesex could do a study of the environmental carrying capacity of the Woods. Justin voiced support for replacing the street parking spaces along Estabrook Road. Kathy and Bonnie expressed objection to Neil’s earlier statement that no further parking on Estabrook Road would be possible and would lead to landowners closing access to the Woods. Lisa felt strongly that the Committee should recommend making up for any spaces lost when the temporary parking restrictions were put in place, and felt that Punkatasset might offer a hopeful option. She added that some of the

alternative parking spots are dangerous, on busy roads, with safety concerns, so we should not give up on returning spaces to Estabrook Road. Peter stated that there were precipitating events that led to the formation of our group, and that one major issue is the “peak” day parking. He would like to look at what is adequate for most days, and then what is needed for peak days. Could there be temporary snow day parking? Jeff stated that events on Estabrook Road precipitated our Committee, but our charge is to look broadly at the Woods. There are some promising opportunities at Punkatasset. Neil said that most of the problems are triggered at Estabrook Road, and from misunderstandings about the status of the land. Polly feels that there is enough parking on most days and times, and is interested in exploring opportunities at Punkatasset. Sally leans toward keeping roughly the same number of spaces spread across the three major access points, but points to a need for “peak” day accommodation.

Due to a lack of time, Polly had to bring the discussion to a close, without reaching any consensus, and with members still wishing to add and clarify comments. Members would like to start with this topic when we meet again in two weeks. Several members felt strongly that the Committee’s charge requires a specific discussion about possible lifting of the parking restrictions on Estabrook Road.

9. **Citizen Comments**

Marcie Berkley noted that she is very concerned about tick borne illnesses, especially at access points that have significant overgrowth. Directing visitors to these access points could have serious public health impacts.

The Committee adjourned at 8:35.

Materials:

- Minutes of July 7, 2016
- Agenda for July 21, 2016
- Draft Classification of Access Points – submitted by Neil Rasmussen and Peter Siebert
- DRAFT Estabrook Road Visitor Data – submitted by Neil Rasmussen 7/15/2016