

Minutes of ROCOR Meeting Jan 31st 2024 at the Roxbury Senior Center 6-7:30 PM

Present: Ben Pincus, Eric Wardle, Debra Rogler, Kahwa Douoguih, Rene Bouchard, Heidi Albright, Skip Martin, Bob Ketchel

absent: Bill Hansen, Andy Apgar

Opening discussion was surrounding agenda template (see end of this document) and the need to create a space for public comment and additions/deletions to the agenda. Heidi volunteered to take minutes for this meeting.

- 1. Review/accept minutes** Minutes were reviewed, no issues or discussion. Debra made a motion, seconded by Bob, to accept the minutes of the Jan 3 2024 meeting. Accepted as written by consensus with no objections
- 2. Clarification of Committee Goals and Mission and**
- 3. Review Guidelines**

Debra spoke of the desire to keep things simple, and this is also what she and others are hearing from the community. In particular, wanting the Roxbury State Forest to remain pristine, not have a bunch of new trails, parking lots or a huge number of visitors– but that it would be nice to connect a few spur trails. People do not want to create a theme park!

Some mentioned how these trails used to connect, but are now overgrown. Short discussion on the state forest management plan, and how they are supposed to maintain the existing trails. Any work on trails would require state permission, but they are also supposed to maintain a pamphlet at the town office that shows where trails are. Ben’s suggestion is to be more of a club of folks who help organize volunteers to keep existing trails open and not get too complicated–consensus was that this was a good idea, that a master plan is blowing things out of proportion. Decision by consensus was to not finalize any guidelines and keep it simple. We could still do a survey and find out what folks in town want. Perhaps we are more of a club and not a grant-seeking committee. Rene offered to talk to the town forester.

Skip’s concerns over safety for kids and others moving around the village were mentioned again, considering a “spoke and wheel” concept where all

trails lead to the village. Kahwa mentioned grants/consultants being useful for planning purposes, and following discussion was that planning for sidewalks or pedestrian ways is really the purview of the planning commission, so there is redundancy. If we are not going to hire a consultant with allocated funds, Heidi suggested the ARPA funds allocated for ROCOR go back to the town to help reduce taxes. Rene said they could be applied to the town solar project which will help reduce taxes in the longer run.

The survey should include some safety questions, and also assure people we are not going to create a theme park, that our goal is to protect and preserve the character of our town and the State Forest. Debra mentioned the possibility of library-loaned skis/snowshoes, and will reach out the RFL on that collection of items. Bob mentioned Roxbury residents can also check out recreation gear from the Northfield Library. The skating rink is another possible outlet/venue to organize volunteers around, as well as Third Branch Park.

We could stop as a committee after Phase I of Rene's proposed guidelines, depending on survey results. The general opinion was that we might choose to dissolve the official committee following the results of the survey and become a club.

4. Review and Report on Action Items

Members discussed their various outreach, and shared the information. No formal actions taken. Skip had some ANR maps, Rene the topos. Ben shared a rough draft of the survey, and asked that we discuss that before jumping to looking at maps. Kahwa will continue networking with accessibility groups in Northfield.

5. Rough draft of community survey

We looked at the very rough draft of the questionnaire, and Kahwa volunteered to work on refining it into a google survey.

Skip offered up a version of a possible mission statement to include on the survey with our goal being to get folks outside and moving, and assure townsfolk we want to keep things simple:

Preserve the character of our small town and conserve the natural resources of the surrounding forest.

Inform residents of resources, trails, and other recreational opportunities

*Promote safe pedestrian travel in, through, and around town.
Improve the quality of life of residents of our community and surrounding towns.*

We agreed there needs to be something about accessibility in the mission, and also in the survey: accessibility can take different forms and welcomes all abilities.

6. MAPPING

we looked at a variety of maps, brainstormed and shared trail info using the USGS topographic maps and Roxbury Town roads map, ANR Maps with state land and public access points

a brief discussion of how the Town gave away “rights” to some legal trails to the ATV groups on the east side of the valley, and it was mentioned how those trails are now in very bad shape. Bob was told they were closed to the public earlier this year. Town-owned trails connecting over to East Roxbury should be open to all residents. A resident of east Roxbury spoke to Heidi how there are no good walking trails on that side of town. Kahwa will reach out to a friend familiar with building maps, based on what we have. another idea is to code them for different accessibility or recreation

7. Determine Date of next ROCOR meeting

next meeting is set for February 28, 2024 at 6pm

8. Additional Business/action plans

the following members agreed to implement these actions:

Heidi: type minutes (completed)

Skip: send mission to Heidi (completed)

Ben: hike, ski, snowshoe the trails

Rene: call forester about forest plan, also discuss permission to clear existing trails

Debra: reach out to the library/Ryan Z about physical recreation gear (snowshoes, etc.)

Kahwa: discuss map generation with friend who knows how

Kahwa: continue accessibility work

Kahwa: generate next draft of survey for review

9. Meeting adjourned at 734pm