

**McLean Land Management Committee
Minutes, September 20, 2007
Selectmen's Meeting Room, Town Hall**

The meeting convened at 7:12 pm for one purpose, to receive public comment on the Pressley Trails Recommendation as presented and available Sept. 10, 2007

LMC Members present: Steve Kidder, Michele Gougeon, Richard Pichette, Carla Moynihan, Ellen Cushman, Wes Ward. Members Martha Moore, Andy Healy and Frank Keefe were not present. Gary Claiborne and Marian Pressley were present from Pressley Associates.

Approximately fifty people attended the meeting that was also covered and broadcast live on Ch. 8, by the Belmont Media Center.

Chairman Ellen Cushman described the rules for the evening to permit everyone to speak, asking all to follow them. Comments will be received by email to ellen@mcleanlandmanagement.com or to her personally, (name/address in the directory) through September 24th. In addition, she asked each of those present to accept two things, as articulated by Wes Ward at a previous meeting: 1. Bicycle riding has been permitted on the McLean campus for decades and, 2. There have been unpleasant conflicts between bicyclists and pedestrians, ranging from words spoken to falls

Comments follow. Prior to each public comment section, Gary Claiborne showed a slide and described the existing conditions and the recommendations:

General: Gary described the total trail system in the following terms:

- 17,450 linear feet of trails
- 16,610 linear feet after making recommended closings
- 17,930 linear feet after opening recommended new trails
- 1,710 linear feet removed as unofficial open space trails to private D, 3,5,9
- 16,220 linear feet of trails in final recommendation

Multi-Use Trail Discussion: Gary showed the multi-use trails, mainly running East-West. If the cemetery trails were added, numbers 6,7,10 an internal loop could be created. There's also the possibility of a lower-priority trail to connect to #15 at lower great meadow. Result would be 86% of the trail system would be multi-use. Only exclusions which would be reserved for pedestrians only are # 16 (the Pine Allee) for hazard and ambiance and Upper #15 (that is considered steep and unsustainable for the long term)

Ellen indicated that the Board of Cemetery Commissioners has no desire to keep bikes out of the heart-shaped meadow. The trail recommendation to move it away from the cemetery road is appealing to the cemetery.

Gary: Understanding the cemetery wishes made it possible to extend the multi-use recommendation into the heart-shaped meadow, possibly creating a small internal loop.

General Comments

- ◆ Bob Delise – Pinehurst Rd
 - ◆ Good, focused trails document
 - ◆ Interested in conservation. Why was the "sanctuary" of the conservation land traded for development? Do the conservation values need to be traded for public use? Can't we just not do anything?
 - ◆ Is there a maintenance budget?
 - ◆ What is the enforcement/safety and security plan?
 - ◆ Should have limitations on some of the trails – pedestrian only
 - Should allow no night access
- ◆ Wes Ward – TTOR
 - ◆ Multi-use trails does not imply that the land is NOT conservation land. It just implies that we recognize that the land is available and used by the public.
- ◆ Tom Grimbale – Cross Street, New England Mountain Bike Association
 - ◆ Public open space for conservation and recreation
 - ◆ The property should stay as is, but improve the trails to minimize user conflicts per the plan by Pressley
 - ◆ Missing from the Pressley plan – parameters and the existing status should be analyzed adequately. Considers the recommendation as a political compromise to a small group of abutting neighbors.
 - ◆ Generally, consider the trail conditions to be good
 - ◆ Would like us to consider connecting trail 6 to trail C
- ◆ Ellen O'Brien Cushman – LMC Chairman
 - ◆ Looked at the NEMBA website and considers a couple of mis-statements:
 - ◆ There is not just one trail recommended for multi-use. There is a recommended route consisting of more than 16 trails.
 - ◆ Pressley was specifically separated from the bikes/no bikes supposed political influences. They assessed and analyzed the trails in consideration of physical and previously examined conservation reports.
- ◆ Elizabeth Allison – Pinehurst Road
 - ◆ Provided a detailed list acreage of the sizes of various open space properties to demonstrate show small the McLean Open Space is: McLean open space 100+, Boston Common and Public Garden 120, Fells 2000, Minuteman 900, Lynn Woods 2000, Blue Hills 7000 acres.
 - ◆ Level of use of this property will increase as the abutting demographic increases.
 - ◆ Demographic changes:
 - ◆ Direct abutters with direct access 100 in '02
 - ◆ " " 1000+ after the Woodlands and Senior living completed
 - ◆ Huge increase in use
 - ◆ Towns with little or no conservation land surround Belmont, i.e. Cambridge, Watertown and Waltham
 - ◆ Submitted the Boston Globe article on the Fells situation
 - ◆ Will single width trails that are multi-use automatically widen due to the extra use
- ◆ Richard Pichette – LMC
 - ◆ Perhaps we should look at having only bicycle trails. Will multi-use trails ever be okay?
 - ◆ What are the specific trails she'd like to see for pedestrians only?

- ♦ Liz Allison – Pinehurst Road
 - ♦ She accepts that there will be some multi-use trails on the property
 - ♦ She will provide a list of the trails she desires to be pedestrian only by Sept. 24
- ♦ Daniel Snow
 - ♦ Bike rides every Saturday. Wants us to know that the mountain bike folks are normal people, not just teenage rogues.
 - ♦ Feels that pedestrians on the property and the property itself will be safer because the folks on bikes will cover more territory than just the average walker. Permitted bikes would provide more visibility.
- ♦ Erica Carere – Pinehurst Road
 - ♦ Past use and demographic is not an indicator of future use
 - ♦ Most of the bike riders are not Belmont residents
 - ♦ Maintenance will be crucial to preserve the line of sight
 - ♦ Need rules and regulations posted on the property at trail heads and on the website
 - ♦ Need appropriate enforcement of violators
 - ♦ Against mountain bike use
- ♦ Richard Pichette – LMC
 - ♦ Need to preserve the connections to all the Open space, vast network of trails on Rock Meadow, Met State, etc
- ♦ Catherine Wolmack – resident
 - ♦ Concerns of US obesity. Providing opportunities to exercise with a network of people. Bicycling was her way into the social networks and allowed her to be more fit, lose weight.
 - ♦ McLean trails are actually entry-level accessible. They feel safe and are close to the bike shops in the community
- ♦ Chip Shaw – Pinehurst Road
 - ♦ User of the conservation land.
 - ♦ It's been a treasure for more than 100 years, unchanged to walk on it.
 - ♦ Leave it as it is, wild and natural
 - ♦ Has had conflicts with bike riders – quick arrival
- ♦ Nick Linsky – Somerville
 - ♦ There are definitely rogue riders. Those people aren't here, they're not part of the process, they don't care what LMC will say. They do what they want. They don't take care of the property the way the NEMBA people do

Zone by Zone Examination – Comments

- ♦ **Eastern Woods** – Gary explained the proposed re-routing through the woods
 - ♦ Roger Wrubel – Belmont, and Habitat Audubon
 - ♦ Trail C is a narrow and beautiful woodland trail. Maintaining it would be difficult, lots of rutting. It should not be multi-use.
 - ♦ Mike Mullins – Lexington
 - ♦ Contrary to popular opinion, if there's a narrow trails that is multi-use, the bike "rut" is in the middle. It's the hikers that would expand the width of the trail.
 - ♦ Tim Post – Somerville, NEMBA
 - ♦ Hikers go into the woods, bikes do not
 - ♦ Putting in switchbacks will prevent erosion/trail widening.

- ♦ Trail C is gentle slope but rock so it's actually stable. A,B and C are the only ones he's seen bikes only
- ♦ Rosalie Kerr – the Woodlands now
 - ♦ Only seen courteous exchanges between bike riders and walkers.
 - ♦ She presumes that with the Woodlands and the senior facility, there will be more walkers, not more bikes.
 - ♦ We need to be good stewards of the land
 - ♦ Should plan for access from/to Freedom Commons
- ♦ Gene Record – Judith K. Record Memorial Conservation Fund
 - ♦ Submitted a letter with maps
 - ♦ Would like to see parking for 5 or 6 cars on Pleasant Street along the Coal Road exit
 - ♦ It's a narrow window of reconstruction of Pleasant Street. Take advantage now.
- ♦ Doug Bomgardner (sp?) – Wheelworks Employee – Lexington Resident
 - ♦ Should reroute the erosion problems
 - ♦ Label the trailheads on the property and the website
 - ♦ McLean Open Space is really a through-point, not a destination for most riders
 - ♦ Wheelworks owners offer monetary assistance
- ♦ Kit Dreier – Belmont
 - ♦ Should label the private property access trails
 - ♦ Need private access points for R&D, Freedom Commons
- ♦ Carolyn Bishop – Belmont, member of the Conservation Commission but speaking privately
 - ♦ Restore, reroute, etc. What are the surfaces recommended?
 - ♦ The U-shaped channel worn by mountain bikes are difficult for pedestrians to walk on so they widen the walkway to proceed safely
- ♦ Gary Claiborne – Pressley
 - ♦ Surfaces would be dirt. Resurface, remove the top soil down to the mineral soil with less organic matter. It's compacted, harder, won't erode, if it's the proper slope
 - ♦ 9 trails go through wet areas
- ♦ Liz Allison – Pinehurst Road
 - ♦ What is the cost per linear foot of reconstruction and of maintenance of the different types of trails
- ♦ Tom Grimble – NEMBA
 - ♦ Good plan showing switchbacks.
 - ♦ Narrow trails control speed, they're safer for shared use
 - ♦ Most bike riders will climb on the fire road and descend on the narrow trails
 - ♦ Volunteered money and effort from NEMBA, even on trails that are not labeled as multi-use. This assertion was backed by Tim Post, NEMBA president
- ♦ Wes Ward – TTOR
 - ♦ Will NEMBA also help with enforcement?
- ♦ Tom Grimble – NEMBA
 - ♦ Yes, with information, education, CPR as enforcement tools but can't write tickets

Red Maple Swamp

- ♦ Gary Claiborne – Pressley
 - ♦ Introduction of trail 8
 - ♦ Little change, few recommendations
 - ♦ Trail reroute near the swamp, it's too steep

- ♦ Need a new higher bridge to prevent debris from collecting
- ♦ Trail E is educational good for walking only
- ♦ Trail north of swamp (new) would require a boardwalk
- ♦ Roger Wrubel – Habitat, Audubon
 - ♦ New trail E is not needed, it causes more fragmentation which is undesirable
- ♦ Nancy Davis, Member of Conservation Commission, speaking privately
 - ♦ Agree with Roger, no need for trail E (new one)
 - ♦ Trail 7 should be set away from the swamp
 - ♦ Trail 8 at the edge of the vernal pool. Change of grade to allow passage for the vernal pool creatures as well as people
- ♦ Magnus Snorrson – Belmont
 - ♦ Trail 8 used to be a sweet, single track but then the water main was laid and ruined
 - ♦ Should consider many of the suggestions as reusing and reclaiming the old trails, not creating entirely new trails

Heart Shaped Meadow & Highland Meadow Cemetery Zone

- ♦ Gary Claiborne – Pressley
 - ♦ Reiterated the heart-shaped meadow path acceptance by the cemetery
 - ♦ Trail connections would be available
- ♦ Gene Record – JKR Fund
 - ♦ Looking at parking in the cell tower area, refer to their letter about the swamp trail and parking

Great Meadow

- ♦ Gary Claiborne – Pressley
 - ♦ Eliminate the trail that's parallel to the Pine Allee at the edge of the meadow. Reroute the trail parallel to 13 away from the wooded edges. Still preserve connection to Habitat
- ♦ Rue Coehlo
 - ♦ Keep multi-use trail #16 in the Pine Allee. Eliminate #13
- ♦ Roger Wrubel – Habitat, Audubon
 - ♦ Don't connect #12 to #13. Don't segment/fragment the meadow
- ♦ Nancy Davis – Member of Conservation Commission, speaking privately
 - ♦ Could a bike path be created in the public way parallel to Concord Avenue between the street and the stone wall
- ♦ Gene Record – JKR Fund
 - ♦ Want to connect #10 and #11 along upper part of the meadow, along #11A.
 - ♦ Want a pedestrian-only trail through the middle of the meadow toward the memorial bench at Lone Tree Hill
- ♦ Tom Grimble, Magnus Snorrson – NEMBA and Kit Dreier -Belmont
 - ♦ Agree with Gene Record on #11A. Maintain #13, don't move it
 - ♦ Need to provide boardwalk of #11 at the wet outlet, not move it
 - ♦ Trail #8 should connect at the lower meadow near the aspens

Pine Allee

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Pine Allee

- ♦ Gary Claiborne – Pressley

- ♦ Long straight trail would allow bikes to build speed and is dangerous. Bike riders could hit the trees, get hurt, damage the pines
- ♦ Not recommended to be multi-use. In pretty good condition.
- ♦ Should be planted with seedlings, not nursery pines
- ♦ Maintain connection across Concord Ave to Hill Club/Habitat trails
- ♦ Tim Post, NEMBA president
 - ♦ Thinks there should be bikes in the Pine Allee
 - ♦ The pine needles create a thick duff, not erosion
 - ♦ Slope is reasonable for multi-use, bikes wouldn't go fast

Northwest Corner and Connection to Mill Street/Rock Meadow

- ♦ Gary Claiborne – Pressley
 - ♦ 2 alternatives exists
 - ♦ add a northern connection of 13 to 15 via F
 - ♦ add a southern connection for 13 to 14
- ♦ Tom Grimble – NEMBA
 - ♦ Endorse the first option (F), not the second option. It's established, sustainable, has meadow grasses, etc
 - ♦ Agrees with the trail #15 reroutes as suggested
 - ♦ Agrees with Gene Record on the Great Meadow comments
- ♦ Gene Record – JKR Fund
 - ♦ Parking could be established at one of three areas, all would need access to trails:
 - ♦ Former McLean Farm – dangerous crossing, would need a light
 - ♦ Rock Meadow parking lot that's scheduled to be repaved and renovated, dangerous crossing, would need a light
 - ♦ Abandoned house on Mill Street, same side of street as open space

General

- ♦ Lynn Delise – Abutter
 - ♦ Be concerned about parking access
 - ♦ Provide signs as notice for all private land
 - ♦ Be concerned about providing access and connections for people and creatures
 - ♦ There will be close run-ins with nature
 - ♦ Concerned about enforcement of violations

Ellen O'Brien Cushman – Chairman, LMC

- ♦ Reminded the public and the committee that comments will be taken through September 24. The LMC will meet at the Chenery Middle School, Community Room next Tuesday, September 25th at 7 pm to discuss the recommendations and comments and agree on next steps.

Meeting adjourned at 9:23pm
Respectfully Submitted.

Compilation of minutes recorded by: Michele Gougeon, Carla Moynihan, Ellen O'Brien Cushman