

March 28, 1992

Minutes of the Victor Hiking Trails, Inc. Meeting

The March monthly meeting was called to order at 7:31 PM on March 24, 1992. Twelve people were in attendance. We began the meeting by going around the room and introducing ourselves.

The February 25 meeting minutes were read by acting secretary, Sue Freeman. They were approved as read.

Treasurer, Allen Johnson reported that our account balance currently is \$184.38. In addition he just received \$30 from mail in memberships which will bring our total account balance to \$214.38. Allen reminded everyone that this and future minutes will only be mailed to paid members.

Chairperson Marcia Bryan reported that last month's hike on Saturday March 14th was tremendous. The hikers followed the Irondequoit Creek feeders on Chauncey Young's property.

Marcia reported that she received a letter of resignation from secretary Bernard McCarthy. She recommended that the executive board appoint Sue Freeman as secretary. The executive board approved this recommendation.

Dave Wright was unavailable to attend this meeting, but he dropped off revised copies of our logo including the word "Inc.". Marcia passed these around for everyone to review.

Esther Phillips is willing to donate heavy orange and yellow paper for use in sign making. Larry Fisher was asked to follow-up with Esther. Thanks for the donation Esther!

Dave Schaeffer, TrailMaster from the Crescent Trail Association joined us to share his expertise and experiences. Dave has been a member of the Perinton Conservation Board since 1973. He's been with the Crescent Trail Association since it's birth. Dave said he has no "magic potions" to offer us to assure our success but he certainly was a wealth of information.

The most adamant recommendation he had for us was to DEVELOP A PLAN. We should think long term (5 to 20 years) and put in writing:

- the proposed uses for our trail system
- the benefits
- the design we are aiming for
- the routes we hope to achieve (including connections to public parks, public facilities, and other trail systems)
- our guidelines of construction and maintenance
- our relationship with town officials and planning boards

The Crescent Trail started as an idea in the Perinton Conservation Board. For 6 to 7 years they made little progress. In 1980 they tried to turn responsibility over to the Department of Parks and Recreation but had no success. Their alternative was to look for citizen involvement. The Perinton citizen's group started the landowner negotiations. In 1989 they sold their plan to the Perinton Town Board and got it adopted as part of the town's master plan. (Victor's Town Board has asked us to operate as a separate entity).

Dave recommends that one of our goals should be to work toward town support. Crescent Trails now has advocates on all the town boards (Planning Board, Conservation Board, Town Board, Parks & Recreation, Public Works Dept, Town Attorney, Town Assessor) who look for and assist with opportunities to expand the trail system. For instance, if people donate land, the town assessor decreases their taxes and gives the donor an estimated value of the land for a tax write-off.

The Perinton Town Board is now willing to accept land titles which are offered to it (take land donations and easement donations). The Perinton town officials now use their drive for open space and their related activities as campaign issues to get themselves reelected.

In it's early days, the Crescent Trail accepted easements and revocable permits directly with landowners. Now these are between the landowner and the Town of Perinton and Crescent Trail just acts as the agent. This means the land is now covered by the town's insurance. In any case, the landowner is not responsible for any accidents unless they acted with malicious misconduct. We can assure landowners that they won't be held liable by a court but it's difficult to counter their valid objection that a suit can be brought against them which takes up their time, effort, and possibly money.

Dave mentioned that new legislation is being proposed to further absolve landowners. He recommended that we enroll as a corresponding organization and gave Marcia Bryan the paperwork.

Carol MacInnes asked Dave if he carries high personal insurance as TrailMaster. Dave responded that he does carry a \$1M umbrella liability policy mainly because he can get it inexpensively as a Kodak retiree.

Dave suggested that we:

- adopt a long term (5-20 year) strategy
- publicize our little successes
- circulate our minutes
- give complementary memberships to cooperative landowners
- find a few landowners who are supportive to begin with (they may be willing to write &/or talk to their neighbors about supporting us)
- don't push people and make enemies, be flexible & patient
- expect resistance, don't let it discourage us (Dave read two examples of letters from resisters - one from a personal landowner perspective and the other from a corporate lawyer's perspective)

Carol MacInnes asked Dave how he approached the initial visit to a perspective landowner. Dave recommended that we NOT call on landowners directly. Crescent Trail has learned to work mostly through developers and negotiate trails into upcoming developments. They are very cautious about approaching personal landowners. They use any indirect means they can think of to approach the people and sense their willingness to cooperate before outright asking them. In the mid 1970's the Perinton Conservation Board did send a letter to developers and land speculators which talked about the benefits of a trail system to encourage them to participate. Crescent Trail has found that most of their hikers are local residents. With new developments where people buy a lot knowing a trail will pass by, they have many fewer complaints as years pass.

Crescent Trail has found that some landowners will give a verbal OK and a handshake as approval to use their land but refuse to sign anything. Crescent Trail has accepted these with no problems.

He recommended asking landowners for permission to hike their land on a one time basis for several years in a row. If they continue to be cooperative and find that no problems result - then ask them for a revokable permit.

Ruth Nellis mentioned the resistance Victor residents have voiced against the historic commission. Many Victor landowners have been here for generations and fear giving up control. We may find a high level of resistance. Dave responded that is very likely and we will just have to accept it, be patient, and be flexible. The best way to change someone's resistance is by personal communication from supporting landowners.

Dave recommends that we get the scouts and students involved. Approaching a landowner with a scout going after a community service project may help lower resistance. Propose that the scout be allowed to develop the trail (under adult supervision). Or, work through school science or environmental clubs.

We should expect objections and understand where opposition will come from:

- objectors will send letters to their neighbors outlining all the possible negatives
- people who own land adjacent to a trail may complain even though they are hikers themselves
- farmers and large property owners fear they're asking for more trouble & that the trail offers an entre for problems
- attorneys & developers feel the permit encumbers a property and reduces it's value (you've lost the battle if a landowner says he/she needs to talk to an attorney before allowing access)
- people feel it's hard to revoke a permit (Crescent Trail has never had a revokable permit revoked - they have moved some trails to avoid the situation)
- landowners are worried that people may sue them
- government officials see the trail as a cost to build and maintain

Problems encountered by Crescent Trail on their trails include:

- motor vehicles (ATVs, snowmobiles)

This can be an opening with a landowner. If the land is currently being used by vehicles we can ask if the vehicles were given permission. If they weren't, we can offer to post it as a foot trail and help police the trail to prevent damage, decrease erosion, decrease noise, etc. Crescent Trail has developed a good rapport with the Sherriff's Dept. They help police the trails, especially the trail heads. Their experience is a decrease in vehicle use when an official trail goes in. Having people walk a trail helps to discourage illegal motorized use.
- vandalism

We should expect some and not let it get us discouraged. Avoid building man made structures like signs, bridges & railings. They are targets of vandals and increase our liability. The worst time for vandalism is the last 3 weeks of the summer before school starts. The most prevalent place is near public roads. We should take our message into the schools and educate the kids.
- parties, groups with beer
- hunting & firearms (has not been a big problem for Crescent Trails)
- dumping & littering

Found mostly close to roads
- mountain bikes

Crescent Trails is still deliberating on whether to allow these. They get a lot of them on their trails (they're not allowed in public parks). The mountain bikers were one of the first groups to show up to help after the ice storm. They do remove obstructions but they go up hills against switchbacks and they do tear up the trails in the spring. Since they go fast, they increase the possibility of injury.
- horses

Chew up the trail
- splatball

Crescent trail hasn't seen any

Crescent Trail experience has shown that existing problems generally decrease when an official trail is put in. Most people are there to hike. The Crescent Trail group looks for opportunities to make connections and get their plans in front of developers.

Our appeal to landowners could include:

- show them our long term plan
- explain the support we have from any town groups
- show how it's volunteer run (no cost to taxpayers)
- appeal to their sense of community
- explain the shared resource concept
- appeal to their philanthropic side (be a pillar of the community)
- tax incentives of donating land
- show how they may already have limited ability to use the land if it's swampy or steep slopes
- orchestrate a land swap
- name a trail after them
- give out appreciation certificates
- offer to take title to the land (rid landowner of liability)
Crescent Trail does not (the town of Perinton takes title). Perhaps we could get another organization to take title such as the Finger Lakes Land Trust, the National Park Service, or the Nature Conservancy.
- Dave is willing to talk to landowners with us

Dave explained how the Planning Board can change variances and set-backs to allow for greater greenspace. This is called clustering. There's also incentive zoning where a developer is offered incentives (such as splitting costs, allowing clusters) if they comply with a community objective such as building a trail system.

Dave recommends that we go after developers early in the development process rather than target private landowners

In Perinton they charge people for breaking easement regulations. The money is used to buy land for greenspace. Also, at the High Acres landfill near Macedon, the town gets a percentage of all dumping fees. This money is also used to buy land. We should look for income opportunities like these.

Each landowner is different. We should not get discouraged and not give up. If we keep the organization going, we can outlast the recalcitrant landowners.

A question was asked about the status of the Fairport water easement from the Fairport Water Shed (now Boughton Park). No one knew the status.

Crescent Trail started painting blazes on trees. They now nail in plastic or metal blazes but the tree grows around it. Dave passed around a sample for the Pittsford Trail group where they had painted their logo on a plastic circle. He reported that Macedon is also starting a trail group.

Dave reported that the Crescent Trail will be giving out a handout at an event called Take A Hike at the Rochester Convention Center. The brochure will mention Victor Hiking Trails, Inc.

We have our goal set The Crescent Trails newsletter will be published including a December hike in conjunction with the Victor Trails group to begin or end at Powdermill Park. We need to have a trail in place by December. Of course we're up to achieving this goal!

THANK-YOU DAVE SCHAEFFER FOR ALL THIS INVALUABLE ASSISTANCE!

June 5, 1993 is National Trails Day. We may want to get involved.

Marcia Bryan reported that Allen Lockwood is working on our incorporation process and needed

changes in the by-laws. A problem he is trying to resolve has to do with taking contributions if we are tax exempt. Dave asked Marcia to have Allen call Steve Weber, the secretary of Crescent Trails because he was the one who achieved their tax exempt status. Another problem area is if we are too much focused toward educational ends, we have to register with the Dept. Of Education.

A meeting of the Executive Board was scheduled for April 14 at 7:00 in the town hall to draft the revokable permit.

Marcia Bryan reported that Harry Lloyd did receive a railroad easement but it was for the wrong railroad bed. Harry will continue trying to get the correct one.

Sue Freeman passed out the revised draft of the new member letter. Several spelling errors were corrected by the group. The group approved the letter for mailing (with noted changes).

Larry Fisher passed out copies of a preliminary design standards for trail development. We're each asked to read them and bring comments for discussion to our next meeting.

Our Saturday hike is scheduled for April 11. Meet at 9:00 AM in back of the fire hall on High Street. The hike will be lead by Carol MacInnes. It will probably involve bushwacking.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:29 PM.

Our next meeting is scheduled for April 28 at 7:30 PM in the Victor Town Hall. We'll see you there.



Sue Freeman
Secretary



Dear New Member,

WELCOME to membership in the Victor Hiking Trails, Inc.! Your contribution will help establish a network of hiking trails in the town of Victor. It is greatly appreciated.

Our citizen's group is newly established. We began exploratory meetings in the Fall of 1991 and have much work ahead of us. As of yet we do not have trails in existence. We must begin the work of scoping out possible sites and negotiating with land owners and developers for public access to their property. Our purpose is to develop a trail system which will preserve open space and will provide an educational and recreational experience for the residents of Victor. One of our initial targets are some wonderful abandoned railway beds which are currently owned by RG&E.

We The People

The people involved in Victor Hiking Trails are kindred spirits. People who care about the land on which they live. People who enjoy nature in all its bounty. People who want to improve their town and leave something that will add value to our lives. People like you. We welcome you among us. We meet on the fourth Tuesday of each month at 7:30 PM in the Victor Town Hall. Meetings are informal and everyone is welcome. Please try to join us.

So you can get to know us better here's a who's who list of Victor Hiking Trails:

Chairperson: Marcia Bryan
Vice Chairperson: Harry Lloyd
Secretary: Sue Freeman
Treasurer: Al Johnson
Historian/Education/Program Chairpersons: Norman Smith & Roberta Lockwood
Trailmaster: Carol MacInnes (Assistants: Ruth Nellis & Ron Czadzeck)
Trail Boss: Larry Fisher (Assistants: Lee Carl, David Wright)
Publicity Chairperson: Robin Emond
Copy/Printing/Newsletter Committee: Sue & Rich Freeman
Membership Chairperson: Margaret Nugent

Membership

Annual membership in Victor Hiking Trails, Inc. costs \$10 per person or \$20 per family. Of course, additional donations are gratefully accepted.

Saturday Hikes

On the second Saturday of each month we gather at 9:00 AM for a 2 to 3 hour hike. Sometimes we follow trails and sometimes we bushwack to scout out new trail locations. Watch the monthly meeting notes to find the location of next month's hike. Please join us it's a great way to meet the members of Victor Hiking Trails.

How You Can Help

Attached is a list of items Victor Hiking Trails needs. If you know of any source for these, please let us know. We're just beginning and we need assistance in a myriad of areas. Join us at a meeting and volunteer your services.

Some of the needs we have (but by no means all) are:

- draw maps
- build signs
- build trails
- identify plants & flowers & birds
- illustrate
- write articles for the newsletter
- collect donated items
- volunteer on a committee
- scout possible trail locations
- help with paperwork

We'll create more opportunities as we grow. Maybe you can provide a skill or interest we need but haven't even thought of yet. You will be surprised how skilled you are. Join us and put your talents and interests to work.

Again, THANK-YOU for joining our association. Together we'll make a hiking trail system through Victor become a reality!

DONATIONS FOR VICTOR HIKING TRAILS, INC.

We need the following items/services as we begin the task of developing a trail system in Victor. If you can donate or know of anyone who can donate any of these items or services please see a board member. Thank-you.

Services:

- a storage facility to store our donated tools and supplies
- expertise in small engine maintenance
- map production and copying
- ability to build trail-head map housings

Tools:

- post hole digger
- sledge hammer
- maul
- clippers
- loppers
- pruning shears
- shovels
- hatchets
- hammers
- hand saws

Equipment:

- bush hog
- chain saws
- mowers
- weed wackers

Misc.

- gas cans (approximately 2.5 gallon)
- funnels
- safety goggles
- plastic garbage bags (for collecting trash & litter)
- water proofing such as Cuprinol
- money (always handy)
- galvanized flat head nails
- sheets of colored 1/8" thick plastic (red, pink, orange, blue, white, purple, flourescent colors?) (to be cut into 2" squares for trail markers)
- metal sign posts
- channel iron
- metal pipe (1.5" or smaller)
- pressure treated planks (to build bridges)
- pressure treated wood (to build map housings)
- nuts & bolts
- plexiglass (to cover signs)
- exterior grade plywood
- first-aid kit