

Charlotte Park and Wildlife Refuge Oversight Committee
Meeting
Wednesday, November 14, 2018
3:30 p.m.
Charlotte Town Hall

Attendees: Dean Bloch, Jenny Cole, Julian Kulski, Andrew Milliken, Sue Smith

The meeting was to discuss the access easement at the Varney Farm and ideas for Route 7 access to the park for limited use. Easement documents were distributed prior to the meeting. Evan Metropoulis expressed his concern by e-mail about access on his property. A copy of the e-mail was available at the meeting.

After looking at the slope of the land from the Varney Farm property, Julian feels that it is too steep for people in wheelchairs (like his wife, Lisa) to make it up to the park trail. He described another option where people could drive in at the Thorp Barn gate and park near the intersection of the Byington and Thorp trails (near Larry's benches). From here, the gravel trails could be accessed. Use could be by permission, with a gate key available at the Town Offices.

Various options for improving and controlling the access at the Thorp Barn were discussed—moving the gate, having two gates, moving the road entrance, having a small parking area behind the Thorp Barn, opening the gate on specific days only, use of permit. Jenny asked if VTrans had future plans for modifying the Route 7 - Church Hill Road intersection. Dean will check on this.

Generally, there was the opinion that allowing access at the Thorp Barn and creating a parking spot for people with disabilities could be done at little cost, and that over time a plan can be developed to provide an option that improves safety and accessibility. Julian and Lisa will test his idea in the spring. Andrew volunteered to check with people at the Nature Conservancy about their experience with the boardwalk and trail at Raven Ridge and grant funding for projects. Dean will notify the Vermont Land Trust of the interest in creating access at the park.

The Varney property easement was discussed. While the Town has a right to a relocated access there, it has been difficult to find a solution that works as well as the original plan. Jenny wondered if we should consider an agricultural access north of the barn to get to fields in the park and on the Metropoulis properties. The old farm road on the property was used to get to the park fields during wet seasons. Jenny will get ideas from farmers who have leased and used the park land.

It was the feeling of the group that the Town should keep the access option on the Varney Farm property for future needs.