

VMI Chessie Nature Trail Advisory Committee Meeting, Feb 11, 2014

The Chessie Nature Trail Advisory Committee met at 4:00 p.m. on Feb 11, 2014, at the VMI Physical Plant, Hinty Hall conference room.

Attending committee members were MAJ Jennifer deHart, chair; Keith Holland; Jay Scudder; Lisa Tracy; and Terry Harrington. Absent were Sam Crickenberger and Chris Wise. Also attending was Joan Meel, City of Lexington.

The meeting opened with MAJ deHart welcoming Terry Harrington, the new City Planner for Lexington. Terry had already read the charter for the committee, and was prepared to step into the role of the City Manager's designee.

TRAIL MAINTENANCE: MAJ deHart provided an update on trail maintenance. Three boulders were placed across the trail at 5-foot intervals in the "industrial zone" to deter unauthorized vehicles. They have had the intended effect. She noted that recent ice and snow have created muddy conditions. MAJ deHart also noted that she notified VDOT about a pothole just off Stuartsburg Rd, near the Buena Vista terminus of the trail.

GRANTS: MAJ deHart provided an update on progress on the Recreational Trails Program (RTP) grant. Coordination and approval by six (6) state or federal agencies is required before the grant funds can be released. Currently the DHR requires more information and the DNH provided recommendations including a rare plant inventory. The USFWS needs further information. The DEQ may need to be re-engaged. Progress is slow and frustrating.

ACCESSIBILITY: MAJ deHart initiated discussion about ADA considerations. She stated that a representative from the Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center (Fishersville) Star Trail visited the trail and provided construction guidelines for a compacted stone surface trail. Jay Scudder pointed out that Buena Vista's floodwall is composed of similar stone surface. Keith Holland cautioned that such a surface may require more ongoing maintenance than can be managed on the Chessie Nature Trail, much of which is difficult to access. The group agreed that improvements to the trail surface would be best made in selected areas that are easily accessed by heavy equipment and by trail users, namely the "industrial section" to the Mill Creek gate, and perhaps about a half-mile beyond to the cliffs. Particular concern was over the effects of winter weather and freeze/thaw cycles. Keith asked how much material would need to be held in reserve? Terry Harrington noted that Skyland Trails has an ADA accessible portion that is hard packed gravel. MAJ deHart plans to bring these concerns and observations to her forthcoming visit of the Star Trail.

FRIENDS GROUP: Lisa Tracy led a discussion of the "Friends of the Chessie Trail" concept. The purpose of such a group would be public education (on trail etiquette, youth programs, etc.), fundraising, and other tasks beyond the scope or capacity of VMI, including tracking trail usage and help with finishing the connection to BV. Such a group could be patterned off the Friends of Greenway in Roanoke Valley. Keith voiced concerns about the double-edged sword of increased usage changing the nature of the trail, such

as animal and plant patterns and livestock encounters. Lisa Tracy agreed to work with others to establish parameters of the group and coordinate activities with VMI.

BOY SCOUTS: MAJ deHart updated the group on the status of a BSA project to install mile markers between Jordan's Point and the South River. Joan Meel presented a map of the new entrance for Jordan's Point Park (2007 drawing) that the City plans to develop. The group agreed that the 0.00 mile marker should be at the north side of the proposed/future pedestrian bridge over the Woods Creek.

NATIONAL TRAILS DAY: MAJ deHart mentioned that this national event occurs the first weekend in June and may lend itself to future celebrations of positive developments and education on the trail. There is not enough to formulate an event for this year.

BONTEX: Jay Scudder stated that he is getting somewhere with the Bontex company regarding access to the rail bed that passes under the Robie Bridge after the current termination of the trail on the BV end.

Meeting adjourned at 5:15pm.