

ANNUAL REPORT, 2022-2023

SPRINGFIELD TRAILS AND RURAL ECONOMY COMMITTEE

The Springfield Trails and Rural Economy Committee persevered the past year in holding the commemorative Toonerville Trail Walk/Run, securing new seats, picnic tables, kiosks, trail markers and historical site posts. It kept abreast of progress on advancing that trail through the biohazard site of the former Jones and Lamson machine tool factory, and with the re-design of the I-91 interchange.

SIGNAGE

QR CODES AND PLAQUES

The Committee is developing interpretive signs including text, maps and QR codes for the Toonerville Trail and Hartness Park. Information was provided by the Springfield Art and Historical Society, the Hartness House, the Springfield Town Library, the Mount Kearsarge Indian Museum, the Wyman/Hatt family, the Richards and Kraft families, Gary Pelton, Rich Holschuh, Jack Ridge, and Trish Hanson.

Springfield Area Public Access provided audio recording assistance and preparations began for creating the QR codes and links to a webpage. Design assistance is being provided by the Springfield Printing Corporation. Installation is expected to be complete by December 2023.

In addition, new trail markers were produced for Hartness Park. These were replaced, and trails at the park were blazed, by the Parks and Recreation department.

TOONERVILLE TRAIL

ANNIVERSARY WALK/RUN

The Covid-delayed 20th Anniversary Toonerville Trail Walk/Run was held on September 17th, 2022. It was supported through donations and volunteers from the Springfield Boosters Club (the sound system), literature printed gratis by Springfield Printing Corporation, **souvenir**

train whistles donated byvolunteers from the Springfield Rotary Club and Springfield High School. There was a pre-race Kiddies' Fun Run. In a first for adapting to changed circumstances, the online registration form had QR capabilities for applicants. The Committee wishes to thank the hard-working, civic-minded and generous members of the Lions Club; financial supporters Paul and Irene Kendall and Parks and Recreation Director Chris Merrill.

TRAIL EXTENSION WORK

The Town developed the final preliminary plan for the Toonerville Trail extension from the present United (formerly Nortrax) site to Bridge Street. The obstacle to extending it is the completion of the necessary biohazard remediation work on the site of the former J&L plant.

VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

The land on both sides of the Toonerville Trail serves as a buffer to the presence of human artifice that is the mark of civilization, in this case, the presence of roads, invasive animal and plant species and associated activities.

The Committee inventoried the invasive species along the Toonerville Trail buffer zone and then contracted out the work to remove invasive plants.

Planting of fruit trees along the trail was considered, but was judged to require too much maintenance to provide a consistently pleasing presence for trail users.

HARTNESS PARK

ACCESS

The access gate to the water tower in Hartness Park, long in need of repair, was fixed, and the the parking site adjacent was improved.

The Skitchewaugh Trail access to the park, determined to be the best entrance, was found to be erratic due to lack of a schedule to unlock and lock its gate daily. The Committee asked the Town to resolve the problem.

BENCHES AND PICNIC TABLES

Benches: new benches and picnic tables were installed at Hartness Park

POLLINATOR HABITAT—

The Committee unanimously supported the principle of creation of pollinator habitat in town. It decided that the Toonerville Trail bench site with the locust trees could be considered as a pollinator site and have a QR code/text post. **The town has set aside a plot of land north of the Recycling Center which might qualify for such a habitat.**

UPPER VALLEY TRAILS ALLIANCE CONSIDERATION

An invitation to join the Upper Valley Trails Alliance was declined.

CONTINUED OPERATION OF THE COMMITTEE

In March of 2023 the Select Board re-authorized the existence of the Committee for another three years.

GRANTS

VOREC GRANT REVIEW AND CONCLUSION

The following is the list of projects funded by the VOREC applied for in 2021 and their status:

- Mapping/design: done
- Printing brochures/maps: done
- Printing event posters/banners: done

- Toonerville Trail 5K Anniversary race timing, materials: done
- Hartness Park bench; done
- Hartness Park picnic tables: done
- Arborist services: done
- Invasives management contractor: done
- Invasives management inventory: done
- Toonerville Trail maintenance: done
- Four new trailhead kiosks built and installed: done
- QR post historic snippet/recording research/script — remains to be done
- QR post historic snippet/recording production: remains to be done
- QR website development/hosting: remains to be done
- Trail signage (50 plaques): in progress; most have been installed

OTHER GRANT APPLICATIONS

The committee supplied information for a Sustainable Vermont Trails Grant application in 2023, and the town was notified the application had been received.

Building Strong Communities announced in late spring of 2023 a Request for Proposals for grants. Discussion was deferred to the next fiscal year.

TOWN FOREST POTENTIAL

The committee began considering the potential of the Town Forest, an area bounded by I-91, the Meeting Waters YMCA campground, Route 5 and a few owners of private lands. It is thick second-growth forest with a thousand-foot hill enclosed, open for hunting and otherwise little used.

I-91 TRAIL REVISION

The Department of Transportation shared with the town its plans for renovations and repairs at the I-91 interchange. This will involve the loss of the part of the Toonerville trail passing at present under I-91. The trail re-route is planned to cross 4 entrance or exit ramps and re-join the original trail at the Young's Road/ Route 5 junction, a route which the committee felt is hazardous to trail users. The DOT plans to start the work no sooner than 2024.

Jim Fog, Chair