Minutes of Regular Meeting of the Hogback Preservation Commission
5 p.m. Wednesday, Sept 22, 2026
In Person
Marlboro Town Office

Minutes

Abbreviations used:
FUA = Facility Use Agreement
HMCA = Hogback Mountain Conservation Association
HPC = Hogback Preservation Commission
MP = Management Plan
SB = Select Board
VLCT = Vermont League of Cities and Towns

1. The meeting was called to order at 5:01 pm. Although Zoom participation had been planned, internet service was out so Zoom could not be used. Persons who were known to be planning to attend by Zoom were contacted by phone to let them know about the situation. Due to the outage, HPC member Ed Metcalfe, who had planned to attend remotely, was unable to join the meeting.
2. The agenda was reviewed and no changes made.
3. Attendance: HPC members Mike Purcell, Sarah Fisher, and Diana Todd. HMCA Secretary Nancy Anderson.
4. Minutes of the July 8, 2026 meeting were approved.
5. Officer and committee reports
   a. Chair's report
      i. Mike had nothing to report that wasn't scheduled to be covered elsewhere in the agenda.
   b. HMCA report
      i. A planned event to collect fungi for DNA identification got rained out. The annual Photo Foray is coming up soon.
      ii. The HMCA invasive plant team tackled wild chervil and wild parsnip removal this summer, and re-checked sites where glossy buckthorn had been removed in previous years.
      iii. The Trail Committee cleaned up several blowdowns on Rim Run. Work is still needed on White's Loop.
      iv. HMCA is looking into the process for obtaining a grant for maintenance and restoration of trails that is administered by VT Dept of Forests, Parks and Recreation. The grants require a 20% match, which can be in funds or in kind. HMCA does not intend to apply this year (deadlines are typically in November), but are considering possible trail projects for future applications, such as restoring the views from the ski slopes, repairing the T-bar bridge and creating a new trail to access it, or opening the view from the Hogback Mountain true summit.
   c. Museum report (Vermont Museum of Natural History/Pool Nature Center)
      i. Diana reported that Board President Jack Widness and recently appointed Executive Director Julia Menges had submitted an email report listing recent and planned

activities, including Road Scholar hikes on Hogback and other activities at Pool Nature Center.

6. Old business
   a. Update on research into having the town establish a Capital Fund for major Hogback projects
      i. Sarah reported on her conversations with town Treasurer Rebecca Sevigny, who explained that the town does not maintain any Capital Funds. The level of administrative effort required to maintain such accounts is beyond the scope of the Marlboro Treasurer's remit.
      ii. Sevigny reported to Sarah that the annual set-aside of $1,000 from the National Grid lease payment has now accumulated to $5,000 which is available to fund work on the road to the Mt Olga summit (aka the Tower Trail). Sarah will hike the trail and assess whether any work is needed now. Discussion covered whether maintenance could be accomplished in frequent small efforts or whether the need for fill and machines to spread it meant that waiting for projects requiring a full truck load are more economical.
      iii. Can the funds available for maintaining the road be repurposed for other projects on Hogback? Would doing so be a good idea? It's not clear who would have the authority to make that decision. No action was planned with regard to this question.
   b. Facility Use Agreement (permit) procedures
      i. The draft of a two-tiered plan for activity permits and insurance requirements that had been developed by the Hogback Permit Working Group was reviewed. The general consensus was that use of drones and use of motorized vehicles should be triggers for the FUA plus insurance tier (in addition to the other triggers already identified).
      ii. The minutes from the Sept 15 SB meeting showed that Treasurer Sevigny had presented to the SB a draft that she had prepared for a two-tiered/insurance requirement permit system. The draft will be submitted to the town's insurance contact for review. Nancy (a member of the Permit Working Group) will contact the Treasurer and ask to see a copy of that draft. The Working Group will wait until they see the Treasurer's draft before reworking their own draft.
   c. Management Plan update – HPC actions called for in the MP were reviewed.
      i. Develop Forest Inventory and Forest Management Plan – As reported at the last HPC meeting, the fieldwork for the Forest Inventory has been completed but the data has not been analyzed. County Forester Sam Schneski is currently on fire-fighting assignment out west. When he returns, Diana will contact him and ask whether the Forest Inventory and the Forest Management Plan will be two separate documents, and what the right timing is for a meeting between the forest owner and the forester to discuss values and goals (in our case with HPC and HMCA voicing owner interests and Schneski serving as forester).
      ii. Dismantle Benedict Cottage – Mike reported that demolishing the Benedict Cottage and shed and grading the site would cost $28,300, which includes dealing with asbestos floor tiles. Options for funding the project were discussed.
         1. Mike and Sarah will ask the SB to include the cost as an item in the town budget proposal for the 2027 Town Meeting.
         2. If the SB declines, HPC will consider whether to collect signatures on a petition to have it included in the warned articles for Town Meeting.

3. Another option would be to ask the SB to designate the approximately $14K annual lease payment from National Grid (or part of the annual payment) as funds to be used for Hogback projects and allow those funds to accumulate year after year until enough is available to pay for the project. Currently that National Grid lease payment (minus $1,000 set aside for road maintenance to the summit) goes into the general fund. Other big, necessary projects that could be funded this way would be repairing the T-bar bridge, funding forest health projects, and dealing with lift cables and towers if and when they become unstable (which is not predicted to happen in the near future). Mike and Sarah will raise this question when they meet with the SB to discuss funding the Benedict Cottage demolition.

7. New business
   a. Review input that the SB received regarding town-owned forests and hiking trails from VLCT's insurance expert at the Aug 13 SB meeting.
      i. Diana, who attended the meeting in question, reported that in addition to commenting on insurance concerns related to permits for events and activities at Hogback, the issue of insurance coverage for volunteers who help maintain the trails, manage the invasive plants, and perform other services on the mountain came up. The Treasurer noted that those activities are organized by HMCA, which is not a town committee, and that therefore she felt that the town's insurance wouldn't cover those volunteer efforts. The VLCT representative seemed to support that interpretation. When asked whether the volunteer activities would be covered if HPC was the organizer rather than HMCA, the VLCT rep did not offer a definitive answer. It was not clear what level of town insurance coverage (if any) was included for the town-appointed HPC members and their projects. The Treasurer felt that HMCA should shoulder the responsibility for insuring volunteer activities. HMCA currently does not carry any insurance. The VLCT rep offered to provide the name of an insurance company that offers insurance for non-profits. Diana noted that since the creation of the conservation area as a town-owned entity, HMCA had understood that volunteers were covered under the town's insurance.
      ii. Diana reported that the above discussion at the Aug 13 SB meeting led to a connected discussion of the relationship between the town and HMCA. Diana had pointed out that the Management Plan assigns HMCA the responsibility for trail maintenance and many other concerns. The VLCT rep mentioned that she knew of at least one other town that uses a non-town nonprofit organization to manage its forest and trails. At the Sept 22 HPC meeting, Nancy reported that HMCA is still exploring its options regarding insurance and whether they want to accept a more formal relationship with the town, such as an MOU. HPC will wait to hear how HMCA would like to handle the situation before making any recommendation to the SB.
      iii. HPC questioned what its own situation is regarding insurance. As members of a town-appointed commission, we assume we are covered by town insurance, but is that insurance only Directors and Officers insurance, or are we covered for other hazards as well? It's not clear how we can get an authoritative answer about this. We don't feel we can ask the town's insurance carrier directly. Can we, as members of a town commission, be authorized to contact VLCT directly for advice? Or should we

funnel our questions through Nick Morgan (the Town Administrator) or Rebecca Sevigny (the Treasurer)? Mike agreed to contact Nick for guidance on this topic.

iv. We discussed the possibility of delaying any additional volunteer maintenance work on the trails until this is resolved, but did not come to a decision one way or the other. It was noted that if the town hired professionals to maintain the trails, those professionals would carry their own insurance. Would the cost to the town of enhancing its insurance coverage to cover volunteer work on the trails be less than the cost of hiring professionals to do the work? (This assumes the current insurance does not cover such risks, but we don't know that for a fact. It's possible that the town insurance already does cover this situation.)

8. The meeting was adjourned at 6:55 pm. The next regular meeting will be on Tuesday, Nov 24, 2026.