

Virginia Creeper Trail Club Meeting
March 27, 2013
Washington County Public Library

Present: Harry Barry, Jane Caldwell, W.J. Cober, Kevin Costello, Myrl Dunham, Lawrence Dye, Eleanor Grasselli, George Kelley, Chris Lindeman, Steve Lindeman, Anne Maio, Debbie Meade, Sharon Miller, Wayne Miller, Roger Reynolds, Richard Smith, Henry Snodgrass, Linda Snodgrass, Debbie Stern, Chris Sullivan, Jeff VanCleaf

VCTC President Wayne Miller called the meeting to order at 7:02pm.

President's Report—Wayne Miller

- The Minutes from our previous club meeting of 29 August 2012 were approved on-line.
- Sharon's special sale Value Menu: Map, Lapel Pin, or Patch.
- Henry Snodgrass highlights the Bike Virginia: June 21-26, 1,600 rider limit, miles vary across six rides. He elaborated on the activities, enjoyment, and fulfillment of some their six previous excursions. Henry and Linda had post meeting discussions.
- Anniversaries - VCT is 25, AT is 75, Wilderness Act is 49; "Ride with the Legend" is August 3rd
- Signatures obtained on the Resolution for VCT partnership with the Abingdon Vineyard and Winery. The Winery will donate a month of their tasting proceeds to the VCTC.
- Volunteers are needed to fill leadership roles for this year: President, Board Member, Merchandise Coordinator, Webstore Manager, Program Coordinator. Kevin Costello, Abingdon Tourism Director, volunteered to join the Board.
- The VCT advisory board has agreed to place two portable toilets at Taylor's Valley, funded by Washington County.

Treasurer's Report

The cash balance is \$35,661. Congratulations to VCTC for charitable donations of \$23,000 over 2011 and 2012 in support of the VCT community: \$1000 United Way of Washington County for tornado relief, \$5000 Town of Abingdon VCT maintenance, \$3000 Town of Damascus for VCT maintenance, \$5000 Washington County Library/Visitor Center in Damascus, \$5000 Purchase of Development Rights along the Creeper Trail, \$1000 Flora of Virginia Project for the Vitaceae Family of VA Creeper Vine, \$2000 Town of Abingdon for Alvarado Picnic Shelter, \$1000 to Abingdon High School for the Panicello Trail Project.

Membership Committee—Chris Sullivan

Membership is 154 members with Current status. Expect to distribute the bi-annual email notification to all members for verifying their status. Chris passed around a hard copy for attendees to review their information.

Summary of 2012 VCT Accomplishments and Activities

Installed eight new Memorial benches, donation to Damascus Library and Visitors center, donation to Panicello Trail, painted both White Top Station and Green Cove Station, cleaned and waxed the 22 Interpretive signs, March VCT clean up, supported Hit the Trail for Hunger, Earth Day, Trail Days, Plumb Alley Day, Highlands Festival and Ride with the Legend, Alvarado river clean up, and enjoyed the September picnic.

Events—Chris Lindeman

Chris reported our next event is the VCT annual clean up, April 6. Meet at 9:00AM at the Abingdon Trail head or in Damascus Food City parking lot. Coffee and donuts for all! Chris distributed copies of the 2013 VCTC Events and solicited volunteers: April 6 Trail Clean Up, April 20 Earth Day, May 18 Damascus Trail Days, May 25 Plum Alley Day, June 1 National Trail Day, August 3 Ride with the Legend, September 29 VCTC Picnic.

Publicity & Website Updates

The VCTC is working with the Town of Abingdon to redesign the free Trail brochure. Kevin Costello will file a Virginia tourism grant, anticipated to open up in April, to assist with the cost and meanwhile he has printed a short run replacement inventory of the current brochure.

State of the Trail—Lawrence "the Legend" Dye

The winter weather has left the trail surface rough. Also, it will be much better when trestles #7, #35 and #36 are up and meeting normal standards. Lawrence has hired the cutting of the hedge growth at mile 14. He is currently at 174,630 miles on the VCT and plans to reach 175,000 about April 13. Roger Reynolds added that the Town of Damascus has fixed the safety crossing issue at Meade Drive and that the Town of Abingdon has surfaced the trail head parking lot and done a substantial amount of tree removal.

Town of Abingdon -

From Kevin Worley's pre-brief email, Wayne Miller reported: For trestle #7 replacement, there were nine bidders at the pre-bid meeting and bid opening is April 1. If a bid is acceptable, it will be presented at the Town Council working session to award the contract. Work to begin quickly and the plan is for the trail to remain open during construction. However, trail traffic may be temporarily stopped (safety, move materials, etc) mainly during normal construction hours on weekdays. It will remain open on weekends.

Next town projects include ditch work between miles 2.2 to 2.5, hedge growth work at mile 14, and water erosion at I-81. Due to a death in ownership of the land, efforts have slowed on the new Watauga Parking Lot Project.

Town of Damascus -

Richard Smith mentioned the historic significance of the train water tank and the project to memorialize the tank; the VCTC had provided funding. The original wood posts remain and Richard is seeking an artist to render the tank onto an Interpretive sign and also assistance with descriptive wording. He will provide the Damascus Town Council with a presentation on Monday.

USFS—W.J. Cober

- Current projects to include (i) general debris and log removal (chain saw and winch) at many of the trestles from #20 up to White Top, (ii) ditch work in many areas, (iii) repair/replace the rusted culvert at Taylor's Valley, and (iv) general surface grading for water erosion.
- Still working on the pond above Green Cove station. Pumped/drained the pond but still could not locate the blocked culvert through the thick muck. Meanwhile, water is now diverted across the trail in lieu of down the trail.
- Congratulations to Doug Goss for earning the Chief's Award from the Washington D.C. Forest Service Office, the highest award given to a volunteer. Help celebrate Doug's accomplishment at Green Cove Station at 2:00PM on 2 May.

Program: Singer and songwriter Wayne Miller

Wayne entertained the group with his guitar and singing six songs written about the Virginia Creeper Trains and the VCT. He concluded the meeting and the group joined him with the song Happy Trails.

Misc

The Evergreen Community Charter School group of about 48, typically split into four crews, will arrive on May 29th to do service projects on the VCT. Tasks and group leads are TBD; need volunteer group leads/assistants.

The 4H center will assist in hosting the Road Scholar group, six are scheduled for this year, each having 12-14 riders from all over the US and Canada, spending four days on the VCT. First event begins April 8.

Perhaps Tom Blevins (USFS Mt. Rogers) could (i) be a good source of information regarding history of the railroad and trains on the VCT and (ii) be a presenter in a VCTC meeting this year. Steve Lindeman will check with Tom on his availability.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:13 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeff VanCleaf, VCTC secretary