

9/21/2021

Dear Members of the Selectboard,

This is Willie Lee, current chair of the Richmond Town Trails committee, and I would like to state for the record the Trails Committee's position on what we believe should happen to the Williams Hill/Palmer Lane ROW.

- Trails committee is seeking only to re-clear a **non-motorized** path within the town right-of-way and is not seeking any access to private land.
- We also propose that there should be **NO PARKING** at either end of the proposed trail, and it be accessible only by foot and bike travel.
- We also believe that the town should never be in the business of giving away land which town members own and could contribute to health and recreation opportunities in our town.
- The select board is the body that has the power to change the designation of the Class IV road ROW to a trail, if it sees fit, and a narrow trail is perfect for this area, as it would offer safe travel between Hillview/Williams Hill neighborhoods and the neighborhoods and forests in the Palmer/Swamp/Sherman Hollow District in Hinesburg.

I also want to reiterate some points I made in an earlier letter to the selectboard involving the Williams Hill ROW and as I believe they give a wider view to this whole process.

Through this whole situation I believe that the trails committee was put in a very tough position. It seems to us like this was an issue needed to be resolved between the town and landowners who abutt the ROW. The town owns this ROW and it should be able to use it how it wants, especially when it is part of the town plan. These two lines come directly from the town plan that was adopted in 2018:

Support safe, sustainable, and convenient mobility and transportation options, so that people can bike, walk, ride, and drive in Richmond and beyond

Support interconnectivity of trails and connectivity of trails with destinations such as the market or park and ride in order to provide non-motorized means of travel

Now that the ROW has been flagged and survey, we don't believe the town should be in the business of giving away potential ROWs, which leads me to my next point.

Misinformation. Misinformation has been rampant throughout this whole process. One landowner in particular has tried numerous times to have the town throw out the ROW, and then claimed in a subsequent meeting that the ROW might not even exist. Now that same landowner

circulated a petition, which triggered this meeting, and which has been signed by numerous people that were probably misinformed about the details of what the trails committee was proposing. Below are a few lines from an email I received on May 30 from a resident on Beatty Lane,

"_____ approached me today about a connector from Williams Hill to Palmer Lane. I was looking to find out a bit more information about the proposal, namely would this be a non-motorized foot path? He said that it would be a class 4 road with jeeps and dirtbikes coming down it. After going to the Richmond Trails Committee website I'm not sure if that's the intent."

Obviously, this is completely false to what the trail committee is proposing. I would be surprised if this was the only person who was approached to sign the petition and told this information, which is clearly misleading. We know that at least 130 people signed the petition to discontinue the ROW. When perusing google maps I counted roughly 21 to 22 houses along Williams Hill and 8 or 9 along Palmer Ln/Rd. While all Richmond residents are stakeholders in any type of town project, I don't believe that a small group of misinformed residents, many who clearly don't even live on the impacted roads, should decide how the town decides to use this ROW. During a June 7th meeting we were also told that an overwhelming majority of residents on Williams hill were against this proposal. As I live on an adjacent road in the area, I know quite a few folks on Williams Hill, and many of them weren't even asked to sign the petition.

Overall this situation has been frustrating and sad, especially as the facts seem quite clear. As a dedicated town volunteer I was verbally attacked during the June 7 selectboard meeting, and never really given the chance to clearly lay out the trail committee's plan, as the meeting became muddled in the grievances of a very vocal group of Williams Hill residents.

The trails committee has a successful track record improving and maintaining 4th Class road connections in Richmond. Both the Snipe Ireland/Snipe Island connection and the Johnnie Brook Road offer great examples of 4th class roads that have been turned to trails and are used to connect otherwise distant areas. We hope we can also make this connection a reality.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

William Lee
Chair, Richmond Trails Committee