

Doreen Marquis  
PO Box 1106  
Richmond, VT

William's Hill Trail Existence? Pros and Cons

Thank you for the opportunity to speak. I'd like to begin by stating that I do support trails and avidly support the healthy choices outdoor recreation encourages. Personally - I hike, bike, walk as often as possible and get great enjoyment out of doing so. I would be remiss, however, if I didn't state that my level of satisfaction would be nullified if I knew my enjoyment came at the expense of someone else, which is why I am here in support of friends and neighbors who have learned to appreciate a certain quality of life for several decades and are now faced with the possibility of having that lifestyle compromised.

I am also here because I believe that this issue is far larger than the account we are hearing about today regarding the possible William's Hill trail. There are many Class IV roads in Richmond and eventually they too will become part of the same narrative we are engaged in tonight, which is why I am respectfully requesting that the Town of Richmond reassesses how it is approaching trail creation. It is not in the town's best interest to "one off" these types of decisions. Instead, a deliberate and thoughtful approach should be employed.

To my knowledge, Richmond does not have a comprehensive best practice guidance document which speaks to consistent process and policy. It would behoove the town to compile such a document. In my opinion, best practice would include the thoughtful exploration of all unintended consequences of creating trails, as well as, establishing mitigation strategies to address those consequences. Additionally, the town should be prepared to think through who will be responsible for enforcing the established guidance and what the consequences will be for not adhering. Any good change management process requires buy-in, and the most effective way to achieve success is to ensure that all interested parties are involved in the process or at the very least invited to participate. The town,

9/21/2021  
RCVD ~17:00  
CMB

special interest groups, abutting land owners and other interested parties should work together to design guidance that reflects *uniformity of purpose achieved through actively listening to various viewpoints and experiences*. I'm not so naive as to believe that 100% consensus can be achieved, but I am hopeful that after thoughtful deliberation an acceptable path forward can occur representing the majority.

I'd like to share one personal experience regarding the unintended consequences of opening up a trail before all aspects of creating that trail are in place - aspects such as agreed upon best practice, parking, signage for parking and rules governing usage of the trails.

I live across the street from a trail - so I am not an abutting land owner. My driveway existed for some time before the trail was created. I state this because there is no chance that someone could mistake my driveway for an old farm road or a forgotten path. There are lamp posts, boulders and flower gardens nearest to the road, requiring someone to drive into the driveway to get past them. One day, I happened to look down the driveway and saw a car parked on my lawn beyond the flower gardens. As I headed down to investigate, I was fortunate enough to see the two folks who left their vehicle edging over to the trail. I called them back and asked that they move their vehicle, explaining that they were on private property and, after all, they were parked on my lawn! Much to my surprise, the gentleman driver was righteously indignant about moving his car, stating that he and his passenger were simply wanting to use the trail and he would move it later. To which I replied, you can use the trail to your hearts' content but you may not park on my lawn which is my private property — please remove your vehicle. This exchange lasted for approximately five minutes and frankly, I think it ended when it did because my husband drove his truck down to the end of the driveway behind me and waited. My husband never got out of his vehicle - neither did he speak to the gentleman, but I did get the sense that the gentleman simply decided that it was perhaps best to park elsewhere.

Again, I remind you that I live across the street from a trail and this was my experience. I contend, that situations such as these can be lessened or avoided entirely by taking appropriate measures at the forefront.

In this instance there was no harm done. But had it been a wet time of year, this vehicle could potentially have created some sizable ruts in my lawn requiring repair. I know that the task of filling in the ruts would have been mine to own, but I maintain that the town is somewhat culpable as it agreed to the creation of the trail before it had adequate parking and/or signage for parking in place to coincide with the trail's opening. Signage needs to exist for parking at every trail mouth so trail users are aware of where parking exists. These kinds of issues should not be left up to nearby land owners to handle.

Cross VT  
Trails are  
supposed to be  
universally  
accessible  
Not all  
in Richmond  
comply

I would also caution the town to be fully aware of language being used to designate certain usage of trails. I know that the Snipe Ireland Trail for instance has a "no motorized vehicle" designation. I understand the intent of this decision, yet, per the language, if a person who requires a motorized wheelchair chose to use the trail, they would technically not be allowed access, but federal ADA law mandates otherwise. The town would do well to very carefully state its intentions to avoid these potentially litigious consequences.

There are many trails that are strategically placed offering some exhilarating fun outdoors, and there are others that struggle to fulfill their purpose because they are ill placed - proximity matters. Creating a very short trail at the end of a quiet cul-de-sac neighborhood, simply because *you think you can*, doesn't feel community balanced to me. For the folks who want the trail, I understand that it would be viewed as a wellness benefit. But what about the folks who live in the area who may renew their physical and mental wellness through quiet time in their flower gardens, on what was once considered the private side of their yards? For them, their health benefit becomes haphazard at best - dictated by the level of activity which may or may not take place on the trail on any given day. Is this fair and balanced?

I would like to close by revisiting some lessons learned from the Yankee article regarding the Kingdom Trail that the town of Richmond would do well to heed:

“We [KTA] lost sight of what we were doing. We focused on business success, money, more businesses coming here and opening up - people having a great time. In the end, we were victims of our own success.”

And most importantly - “ ...there has to be a balance between economic growth and quality of life.”

A singular laser focus on trails and the benefits associated with their creation became the nemesis of the Kingdom Trails Association. KTA lost sight of the needs of the land owners - the very people who made it possible for them to enjoy utilizing what can be considered some of the best trails. It's not difficult to deduce why the fracture of mistrust and dissent grew replacing the previous community support.

None of us should feel so entitled that our preferred form of recreation supersedes the respect and consideration owed to neighbors and fellow community members. Richmond should avoid repeating these mistakes.