

Kirkland Trails

Hello to all supporters of Kirkland Trails, and welcome to our first ever newsletter!

Issue 1, December 2019



Annual Kirkland Trails Member Meeting in January 2020

Kirkland Trails will hold its first annual member meeting on Monday, January 13, 2020, at 7 pm in the St. James' Church Parish Hall at 9 Williams St, Clinton, NY. Members will hear reports on Kirkland Trails activities over the past few years, especially 2019, and discuss future plans. In addition, three positions on the nine-member Board of Directors will be up for election. These positions are for three years on the Board of Directors. Kirkland Trail members will receive an agenda for the meeting in early January, including a slate of candidates for the open positions on the Board and directions for voting.

Kirkland Trails' Year

Kirkland Trails has had quite a year in 2019! We now are incorporated with the State of New York; we also established a Board of Directors and created by-laws, achieved fiscal sponsorship with the Community Foundation, started using our first grant, from the Hamilton College Town Gown Fund, and received a permit from the State of New York for developing the initial 2.5 miles of trail. Looking ahead to 2020, we have lots of plans, including finishing work on the initial trail, holding a community meeting, applying for grants, and exploring possible trail routes on the north side of town. Stay Tuned—and thank you for your important support. Kirkland Trails is a community venture, and will succeed based on solid community support.

Sharon Williams

Membership in *Friends of Kirkland Trails*

We seek support from Friends of Kirkland Trails to raise funds for expenses related to trail construction and maintenance, organizational expenses such as liability insurance, trail signage, and trail amenities such as some rest stops along the trails (for example, occasional benches at scenic locations, and bike racks).

Membership Details on Page 4



Kirkland Trails Groundbreaking

On Monday, October 7th, Kirkland Trails along with several key contributors celebrated the groundbreaking for Phase I of the Chenango Canal Trail.



This portion of the trail starts from Deansboro where the Town of Marshall trail ends then runs north along the old railroad corridor for 2.5 miles across Dugway Road to Route 12B near the intersection of Harding Road (Route 233). As the title implies, Phase I is just the beginning of a hoped-for Chenango Canal Trail that traverses the Town of Kirkland from the south to the north. Members of the Kirkland Trails board, Town of Kirkland representatives, the Hamilton College President and local media gathered for the groundbreaking where the trail crosses Dugway Road.

The Town of Kirkland, which is improving and maintaining the trail, has been a key partner – not just supportive but fully invested in the project. New York State, as the actual owner of the railroad corridor along this stretch, has encouraged our access and the trail improvement. Hamilton College's generous contribution has enabled our planning

progress. And Chad Davis, through his own Advantage Abstract Company and the work of his research assistant, performed the needed land title searches to secure permanent access to the trail. In addition to these key contributors, most property owners adjacent to Phase I of the trail have endorsed these trail improvements. Most importantly, when presented with the vision of the proposed Chenango Canal Trail, the community at large has loved the notion of easy access to a safe, beautiful historic route through the town.

The day of the groundbreaking ceremony was cloudy and rainy. Jon Scott, Town Highway Superintendent, who has since our start provided technical assistance and support, anticipated the conditions and dumped gravel at the site to keep us off the mud. Our local media, including the

Clinton Record, the *Waterville Times* and the *Observer Dispatch*, were there to cover the event. To kick things off, Trails President Sharon Williams welcomed everyone and described our group's background, our vision and



Hepatica - native spring wildflower in bloom along the trail

some of our plans. She thanked Hamilton College President David Wippman and noted that their initial Hamilton College Town Gown Fund grant was crucial in helping Kirkland Trails get established as an organization. She further

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noted the Town of Kirkland Board has unanimously supported our efforts. Deputy Town Supervisor Garry Colarusso spoke on behalf of the town and struck a chord that set a harmonious tone for the groundbreaking. Here's what he said: "In order to get along in an area, you have to partner yourself with other people and other organizations. If you look in Webster's Dictionary for the word 'partnership' you would find these people. The town, the village, county legislators, Hamilton College... all the people partnered to get into something bigger than themselves. That's the whole idea of a partnership, to bring people together for a common goal to fight for something the whole community can enjoy."

With that and after a photo opportunity with the town's vintage road grader and a front loader in the background, the participants enjoyed some treats and cider – may we have more to come.

Chip Bassett



Trail Plans - Short and Long Range

The mission of Kirkland Trails is "to develop a network of connected multi-use trails, paths and bike lanes in the Town of Kirkland, NY to provide our community and the Greater Mohawk Valley with safe routes for recreation and transportation and the opportunity to learn about local history and the natural environment". A little knowledge of local history and geography is important in understanding how we plan to accomplish this.

The Erie Canal, completed in 1825, was pivotal in opening the American West and brought prosperity and prominence to Upstate New York. It inspired the building of other canals, some of which connected with the Erie, such as the Black River Canal from Rome to Carthage and the Chenango Canal from Utica to Binghamton, completed in 1836. The Erie Canal ran through Utica along what is now Oriskany Boulevard. The Chenango Canal started there and ran south along

the route of the current North-South Arterial and Route 12B through Clinton. It continued south through Deansboro, Oriskany Falls, Hamilton, Norwich and other towns along today's Route 12 before reaching Binghamton.

Following the Civil War, canals were replaced by railroads which were faster and could operate year around. The Utica, Clinton & Binghamton Railroad, which opened in 1868, followed the same corridor as the Chenango Canal. It eventually



Membership:

Annual Membership Levels:

\$5 Student, \$20 Adult

\$30 Family, \$15 Senior

We also welcome Major Gifts from Sponsors. Levels: \$100-499 Bronze, \$500-999, Silver, \$1000 and above Gold



*Become a **member** of *Friends of Kirkland Trails* online at kirklandnytrails.org, or by mailing a check made payable to 'Kirkland Trails, Inc.' to Kirkland Trails, Inc., P.O. Box 86, Clinton, NY 13323.

***Donations** made to Kirkland Trails through The Community Foundation of Herkimer & Oneida Counties are tax deductible. Give online at www.foundationhoc.org/kirklandtrails

You can also donate by check. Please make checks payable to '**The Community Foundation of HOC**' with '**Kirkland Trails**' in the memo and mail them to: Kirkland Trails, c/o The Community Foundation of HOC, 2608 Genesee Street, Utica, NY 13502

Thank you for your support!

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became part of The Ontario & Western (O&W) Railroad, which ceased operations in 1957, and the tracks were removed. The Rome & Clinton Railroad branched off the Utica, Clinton & Binghamton line just north of the village and ran parallel to Kirkland Avenue through Clark Mills and Westmoreland to Rome.

Historic canal towpaths and railroad beds are ideal routes for multi-use trails and have been so used extensively in the U.S. They have a solid foundation, are relatively straight without steep grades and are elevated above wet, marshy areas, making trail development less difficult and expensive. They connect towns, but often run through undeveloped areas away from roads, allowing the user to enjoy nature in relative quiet.

Kirkland Trails' current plans are to develop trails in the Chenango Canal corridor and the Rome & Clinton RR corridor, using the railroad beds wherever possible. Our hope is that eventually the Chenango Canal Trail will connect with the Rayhill Trail (via Middle Settlement Road) and possibly the New Hartford Town Park to the north and Hamilton, Norwich and Binghamton in the south. The Rome & Clinton RR route would be ideal for connecting to the Erie Canalway Trail in Oriskany. Other trails might be built separately from the canal and railroad routes, for example up the hill to Hamilton College.

We held a groundbreaking ceremony in October for *Phase One* of our proposed trail network. Known as the Chenango Canal Trail south section, it runs between Deansboro and the intersection of

Rtes. 12B and 233. This 2.5mile segment was chosen for our initial effort because it is entirely owned by New York State, the railroad bed is mostly intact, no bridges are required and it has been maintained for years by the CNY Snow Travelers snowmobile club. This makes it the easiest and least expensive section to develop. A New York State Permit for Use was granted to the Town of Kirkland, our sponsoring agency, in late August, and work was begun at the beginning of October. When completed next spring, there will be a continuous 6-mile multi-use trail from Route 12B to the quarry in Oriskany Falls, including the segment in the Town of Marshall. The trail surface will be cinders or stone dust similar to that in the Town of Marshall, not pavement. We are currently considering trail amenities including a trailhead kiosk, signage, benches, etc.

Our *Phase Two* projects are north of the Village of Clinton and will be more challenging and take several years to complete. We plan to continue the Chenango Canal Trail starting at McBride Avenue and continue northward parallel to Route 12B, ending at its intersection with Limberlost Road. From there, connections could be made to New Hartford and the New Hartford Town Park across Route 12B to the northeast, to Middle Settlement Road and the Rayhill Trail to the north and to Town of Kirkland property including scenic ponds and wetlands just to the west. A major challenge in this section is the need to construct a bridge across Sherman Brook just north of the village. We also hope to develop the former Rome &



Continued from page 4 Clinton RR bed which branches off the Chenango Canal Corridor north of Sherman Brook about a third of a mile from McBride Ave. We have retained a landscape architecture firm with trails experience to conduct a feasibility study of the proposed trails, and we are researching titles and contacting property owners in the footprint of the projected routes. In the spring of 2020, we may apply for state grant funding for more detailed engineering studies and eventual trail and bridge construction. Actual trail development in this area is unlikely to begin in 2020.

The *Phase Three* plan is to connect the Phase One and Two trails through the village along the Chenango Canal corridor and south of the village to the Rtes. 12B and 233 intersection. Major hurdles anticipated in this segment include the need for bridges across both White Creek behind the Town of Kirkland offices and Oriskany Creek near the 12B/233 intersection. It will probably also entail obtaining easements from many more property owners. As a result, construction of this segment will likely be farther in the future, although some portions might be accomplished sooner than others.

New York State Government and Governor Cuomo are actively promoting the development of multi-use trails, especially those “lateral” canal trails which connect to the Erie Canalway Trail, which is nearing completion with extensive state funding. New funding for lateral trails is anticipated shortly. With this in mind and growing enthusiasm locally and nationwide for recreational trails, we are optimistic that we will realize our vision incrementally in the coming years.

Jim Bramley



Kirkland Trails, Inc.

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Thank you to CCS art teacher Angelo Gaetano and Kim Blum, class of 2019, for designing our beautiful, evocative logo!

Thank you also to the Town of Kirkland, Hamilton College, and the greater Kirkland community for all your support!

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