

# Article #29 – Southborough Trails Committee Bylaw

## Article Summary:

This article replaces the current ad hoc Southborough Trails Committee (STC) with a standing committee. The existing committee was established in 2013 and has proven to be effective at establishing and maintaining trails. This bylaw makes it a permanent committee with clearer responsibilities and a more flexible organization.

## Why Change from *Ad hoc* to *Standing Committee*?

- An ad hoc committee is a special committee created to perform a specific task(s) or to accomplish an objective; normally time limited and then dissolved after the task or objective has been completed
- A standing committee is listed in the bylaws and considered a permanent part of an organization
- STC was formed in 2013 as an ad hoc committee and members (past & present) have contributed 9 years of work to Southborough—there is a clear need and benefit to Southborough for STC to continue its work
  - Charter was updated in 2021, via a Select Board vote, to add associate members (non-voting) enabling more residents to serve and creating an opportunity to add new talent to the STC
  - Charter remains the same in the proposed bylaw: establish, maintain, and improve trails; promote awareness through outreach, programming, and partnerships; five (5) voting members and associate members
  - Standing committee adds more budget transparency so it is clear what money is allocated to trail expenses



*Peninsula Trail, guided hike led by DCR Sept 2021*

## What are Associate Members and How Will They Contribute?

- STC associate members are non-voting members who attend meetings and participate in project work as availability permits
- Associate Members **do not** impact quorum
- Excellent way to become familiar with the work of STC before taking on full-time responsibilities (if desired)
- Leverage talented residents who may have limited bandwidth but who want to volunteer and contribute
- Helps to ensure institutional knowledge is passed on when there is member turnover
- Higher level of volunteer commitment and ongoing accountability than residents attending a public meeting or volunteering for a work party



*Troop 92 and STC members, trail work 2021*

## Communities are leveraging associate members in same capacity for the same reasons across Massachusetts (*this is not a new structure*):

- Examples: Weston, Ashland, Chatham, Westwood, Arlington, Canton, Webster, Marion, Norfolk, Walpole, Lexington, Acton, Northborough and more...

## Why are Associate Members Important to STC?

- STC is one of three (3) committees that performs manual labor outside of monthly meetings to accomplish its mission (STC, Open Space Preservation Commission, and Stewardship Committee)
  - More members to help maintain trails and execute STC tasks is beneficial and more sustainable for the committee long term
    - Already familiar with the trails and other projects; can step up and help as needed
    - Covered under town liability insurance
  - Trail maintenance typically takes place Spring/Summer/Fall – associate members will be able pitch in to help accomplish these tasks (providing important coverage during peak vacation schedules)
  - Not all trail maintenance requires a work party; individual members typically perform ongoing maintenance themselves
    - Work parties take a lot of time, effort, and member/volunteer commitment to coordinate. We still do this, but it's not needed for all maintenance
    - Associate members = more hands to assist with work; streamlines coordination efforts



*STC members, trail work 2021*

## STC reached out to 10+ Boards/Commissions/Committees, Southborough's General Counsel, and the MA Attorney General's Office to Incorporate Feedback for this Bylaw:

- Select Board, Advisory, Recreation Commission, Economic Development Committee, Southborough Public Accessibility Committee, Conservation Commission, Stewardship Committee, Council on Aging, Capital Planning, Southborough Open Land Foundation
- General Counsel was consulted about changing from ad hoc to standing, the use of associate members, and a thorough review of the bylaw was conducted and redline suggestions incorporated
- Reached out to MA AG's office to ensure use of non-voting associate members would not create issues for Southborough
- Established a **Member Conduct Policy** to ensure all members, full and associate members, comply with Open Meeting Law and Conflict of Interest laws – [visit website](#) to review policy
- We listened to stakeholders, addressed key issues, and amended the bylaw to incorporate feedback



*STC members & volunteers, trail work 2021*



*STC members & volunteers, trail work 2022*



*STC members & volunteers, trail work 2022*

**PLEASE VOTE YES TO SUPPORT THE SOUTHBOROUGH TRAILS COMMITTEE**

[www.southboroughtrails.org](http://www.southboroughtrails.org)