

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