

## Winni Trail team planning for future

By TIM CAMERATO | Oct 17, 2015

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**BELMONT** — About a dozen people gathered at Belmont's Corner Meeting House on Thursday night, to share ideas and learn about the future Winni Trail.

Construction on the 1.8 mile trail is scheduled to begin next week. Once it's completed around Thanksgiving, it will take cyclists and pedestrians from the Town Beach to behind Osborne's Agway.

Ron Mitchell, chairman of the Belmont Recreational Alternative Trail Team, said the trail will be Belmont's link in a much larger network that will someday connect Concord, Meredith, Lebanon and Wolfeboro.

“Our vision was that we'll have an east-west trail, so you'll be able to go from Vermont to the Maine border,” Mitchell said.

After 15 years of fighting red tape and finding funding, Belmont's trail is about to become a reality. It's that reason Mitchell said the team decided to hold a meeting – to get active again.

Interest in the Winni Trail brought Eileen Burnell to the meeting. About a week ago, she decided to walk the future site of the trail and explore with her dog.

“I'm really anxious to see somebody else out there,” she said. “It's really pretty and I can see the vision that you (Mitchell) have.”

Michelle Solak has only lived in Belmont for the past three months but said she's been on the future trail a few times.

“I always like getting out, and I love nature and I don't like walking on the roads, the busy roads,” she said.

BRATT member Donna Hepp said she's now working with businesses along the trail to come up with ideas of how it could be better. She said future initiatives could include things like a cross country ski track in the winter, bike rentals, joint maps with the WOW Trail or Winnepesaukee River Trail and even an adopt-a-trail program.

One woman suggested holding yearly cookouts when the trail opens and closes to entice people to participate in clean-up days. And a man asked if the town Department of Public Works would be involved in large projects like removing fallen trees. Land Use Technician Rick Ball replied “yes,” and the man suggested creating signs with police and public works numbers people can report things to.

Mitchell said he would like to get a work party together to clean the first part of the trail along Route 3 of trash, and WOW Trail Executive Director Gretchen Gandini offered to make it a joint-trail event.

“Some invasive plants and other things have sort of come in and we're talking about setting next year a trail cleanup day in the fall, a trail cleanup day in the spring,” Gandini said. “Maybe that's something we can coordinate.”

Going forward, Hepp said the team is looking for new members to meet once a month and plan the trail. She also said they're looking to build a “friends” group of volunteers who can contribute their strengths to projects on the Winni Trail. Anyone interested can give her a call at 414-258-3287.

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