

## Karen Stewart

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**From:** Nic Stark <nic@rutlandrpc.org>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 3, 2024 10:08 AM  
**To:** Karen Stewart  
**Subject:** D&H Rail Trail Council Documents for Castleton Select Board  
**Attachments:** DH\_RT\_COUNCIL\_RESPONSIBILITIES\_04.docx; DH\_RT\_COUNCIL\_BYLAWS\_04.docx

Hi Karen,

Attached here are the documents I mentioned on the phone, including a Statement of Purpose and Bylaws for the Delaware & Hudson Rail Trail Council.

They are relatively brief and straightforward but I will be happy to address any questions or concerns during the 1/8 Select Board meeting.

My ask of the Select Board (as further described in the documents) will be to nominate a representative to the Council (can be anybody they see fit) on behalf of the Town of Castleton.

Please feel free to reach out with any thoughts or questions in the meantime.

Thanks,

Nic



### **NIC STARK** | GIS PLANNER

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# Delaware & Hudson Rail Trail Council: Proposal for Council Responsibilities

## Draft v2

### Introduction

The Delaware & Hudson Rail Trail (DHRT) is a vital asset that runs through Rutland and Bennington counties in Vermont, and Washington County in New York. As a multi-use trail that appeals to a diverse array of outdoor enthusiasts, the DHRT has the potential to become a cornerstone of regional economic development, community health, and social engagement. The Delaware & Hudson Rail Trail Council, under the guidance of the Rutland Regional Planning Commission and VTrans, aims to coordinate efforts for the enhancement and sustainable management of this invaluable resource.

### Objective

The Delaware & Hudson Rail Trail Council's principal objective is to act as a unified coordinating body that ensures the seamless development, management, and enhancement of the DHRT. This proposal outlines the council's responsibilities.

### Council Responsibilities

#### Trail Development and Management Plan

1. **Trail Development & Improvement:** Identify, evaluate and review projects related to the development, improvement, maintenance, protection, and operation of the Delaware & Hudson Rail Trail.
2. **Connect the Missing Link:** Identify opportunities, assist in, and advocate for the completion of the rail trail between Poultney and Granville.

3. **Trail Management Plan:** Develop, implement, and regularly update a trail management plan for repair and maintenance for trail surface, amenities, miles markers, bridges, and road crossings.
4. **Policy Setting:** Develop trail-related policies as they pertain to Council activities and provide input into any policies developed by the Vermont Agency of Transportation and municipalities as they relate to the trail and its use.

### **Current Maintenance Responsibilities (Not Expected to Change):**

VTrans is responsible for trail maintenance.

Municipalities with lease agreements are responsible for maintenance of trailheads and potentially small segments of trail.

VAST Members have the authority to deal with minor maintenance related issues during their season (November 15 – April 15) – primarily grooming, VAST specific sign installation and removal, and tree cleaning.

## **Community and Stakeholder Engagement**

1. **Communication:** Keep all stakeholders, including municipalities, businesses, special-interest groups, economic development organizations, and the public informed and engaged.
2. **Public Relations:** Develop and maintain a strong public relations strategy, including marketing materials and encouraging educational programming.
3. **Volunteer Coordination:** Support engagement with trail communities, coordinate volunteers, trail ambassador programs, and local initiatives.

## **Grants and Partnerships**

1. **Grant Applications:** Develop and submit state, corporate, and foundation grant applications.
2. **Trail Friendly Business Program:** Develop, promote and sustain a trail friendly business program in order to assist local businesses with the economic development benefits that a multi-use trail can bring.

## **Chapter Responsibilities**

Chapters will be formed in each key community through which the trail passes—currently: Castleton, Poultney, Granville, Pawlet, and Rupert. These chapters will be responsible for:

1. **Monitoring and Reporting:** Regular inspection of the trail, reporting to the council at meetings any incidents of note since prior meeting, and looking for trail encroachments, reporting on status of trail amenities like benches, bulletin boards, restrooms, etc.
2. **Attending Recurring Council Meetings:** Each chapter would be expected to send representation to Council Meetings.
3. **Membership:** Recruiting and managing chapter members.
4. **Local Fundraising and Events:** Organize local fundraising events and seek local sponsorships.

## Equally Shared Responsibilities

1. **Information Dissemination:** Trail maps, brochures, and newsletters.
2. **Law Enforcement & Emergency Services Coordination:** For security and rule enforcement on the trail.

## Conclusion

The Delaware & Hudson Rail Trail Council, along with its chapters, aims to establish a cohesive, well-managed, and community-supported trail system that serves as a regional asset.

Party	Responsibilities
Delaware & Hudson Rail Trail Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Coordination of trail development &amp; improvement</li> <li>- Explore and pursue approaches to connect the Missing Link</li> <li>- Develop a Trail Management Plan (as required by VTrans)</li> <li>- Policy setting for the Delaware &amp; Hudson Rail Trail</li> <li>- Develop a communications strategy to keep all stakeholders and the public informed and engaged</li> <li>- Develop a Public Relations Strategy including Marketing and encouraging educational programming</li> <li>- Develop Volunteer Coordination System for Council Chapters (eventually including a Trail Ambassadors Program)</li> <li>- Develop and submit state, corporate, and foundation grant applications.</li> <li>- Trail Friendly Business Program (as required by VTrans)</li> </ul>
Rutland Regional Planning Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Council administrative duties</li> </ul>
VTrans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Trail maintenance</li> </ul>
Municipalities with lease agreements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Maintenance of trailheads and potentially small segments of trail</li> </ul>

VAST Members	- Minor maintenance related issues during their season (November 15 – April 15) – primarily grooming, VAST specific sign installation and removal, and tree cleaning
Council's Chapters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Monitoring and reporting trail issues</li> <li>- Attending recurring Council Meetings</li> <li>- Membership</li> <li>- Local Fundraising and Events</li> </ul>
Equally Shared by All Parties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Information Dissemination (Trail maps, brochures, and newsletters)</li> <li>- Law Enforcement &amp; Emergency Services Coordination</li> </ul>

# **BYLAWS** of the DELAWARE & HUDSON RAIL TRAIL COUNCIL

## ARTICLE I - ORGANIZATION AND PURPOSE

The Delaware & Hudson Rail Trail Council (hereafter referred to as 'The Council') is dedicated to the oversight and enhancement of the Delaware & Hudson Rail Trail (DHRT), which spans Rutland and Bennington counties in Vermont, and Washington County in New York. The Council's specific roles and tasks are detailed in a separate document titled "Delaware & Hudson Rail Trail Council: Statement of Responsibilities." The operational structure, powers, and roles of the officers of The Council are outlined in the subsequent articles of these bylaws.

The Board of Directors (hereafter referred to as 'the Board') oversees Council activities.

## ARTICLE II - MEMBERSHIP

### A. **Eligibility for Membership**

- Each New York and Vermont municipality through which the trail passes (hereafter referred to as 'The Municipalities') shall appoint a Board member as well as an alternate from the public or their own membership, as chosen by their respective select board or council.
- Any Chamber of Commerce of The Municipalities or regional Chambers may appoint a Board member.
- Vermont Association of Snow Travelers (VAST) may appoint a Board member.
- Affiliates from 'Friends of the Trail' or similar entities will be granted Board membership as determined by the Board.
- Each Regional Planning Commission/Agency through which the trail passes may appoint a Board member.
- Interested individuals, organizations, or firms may become non-voting Council members.

### B. **Conflicts of Interest**

- Members must disclose any clear conflicts of interest and potentially abstain from related votes unless such interests are widely shared within the region.

### C. **Board of Directors**

- Any organization or Municipality on the Board should have a primary and alternate Board member registered with the Board.
- Appointments can fill vacancies until the next annual meeting.

### D. **Ex-Officio Board Members**

- Non-voting Board members may be included from relevant Vermont and New York State agencies.
- Non-voting Board members may be excluded from contract-related discussions at the Board's discretion.

### E. **Board Membership Commitment**

- Three consecutive absences by any seat may lead to communication to ascertain continued interest.
- The Board reserves the right to suspend an organization from membership until new representatives are appointed.

### F. **Declaration of Inclusion**

In alignment with our commitment to fostering an inclusive and welcoming environment for all, The Council hereby adopts the following Declaration of Inclusion:

"The Delaware & Hudson Rail Trail Council condemns racism and welcomes all persons, regardless of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, age, disability, or socioeconomic status. We are committed to ensuring that everyone feels safe and respected within our community and along the trail.

As a Council, we formally condemn all forms of discrimination, commit to fair and equal treatment of all individuals who interact with our organization, and will strive to ensure that all our actions, policies, and operating procedures are reflective of this commitment.

The Delaware & Hudson Rail Trail is a place where individuals can enjoy the trail freely and express their opinions without fear of discrimination or bias.

This declaration is a testament to our ongoing commitment to inclusivity and equity, and it will guide our operations and interactions within the communities we serve."



## ARTICLE III - COMMITTEES

### A. **Committee Formation**

- The Board may form committees as needed.

### B. **Executive Committee**

- The Board may appoint an executive committee for interim activities.

## ARTICLE IV - MEETINGS

### A. **VT Open Meeting Law**

All meetings, notices, and agendas must comply with Vermont's Open Meeting Laws.

### B. **Frequency**

The Board must meet a minimum of four times per year.

### C. **Special Meetings**

Special meetings can be called by the Chairperson or upon petition of two or more members.

### D. **Annual Meeting**

The annual meeting is to be held each January. The agenda must include the election of all members and officers, the agenda may include a review and update of the Bylaws.

## ARTICLE V - OFFICERS

### A. **Officers**

- Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Secretary (and/or Co-Secretary to be filled by a Rutland Regional Planning Commission Employee).

### B. **Duties**

- **Chairperson:** Oversees meetings and provides overall supervision of the Council Board.

- **Vice-Chairperson:** Assumes the duties of the Chairperson as needed.
- **Secretary:** Maintains minutes, organizes meetings, issues notices, and manages other records.

C. **Election and Terms**

- Officers are to be elected annually, serving one-year terms, and may be reelected.

ARTICLE VI - QUORUM

A quorum for Board meetings shall consist of at least five voting members.

ARTICLE VII - AMENDMENTS

The Bylaws can be amended by a two-thirds majority vote at a duly notified Council Board meeting.

ARTICLE VIII - MEETING CONDUCT

Meetings will be governed by the latest edition of *Robert's Rules of Order for Small Boards*.

**Adoption Date:**

**Attest:**