

Rustic Ridge Association, Inc.

President's Letter

March, 2014

Greetings!

Here's an update on items of interest as well as a request for payment of annual dues. (See attached form for details.) As mentioned in the holiday letter, the search for a new owner of the Northfield campus is our greatest long-term concern. In response to a recent email I sent to the National Christian Foundation (NCF) executive leading this search, I learned the search is on-going – nothing yet to report. She knows we stand ready to assist and promises to call upon us if and when there is anything we can do to help.

In other areas of interest there is more to report, primarily due to the work being done by members of the board, committees and others in the community. Following is a report of progress and next steps.

The **Youth Activities Committee** is planning for a series of youth activities on the Ridge next summer. While only a few of us have completed the Youth Activities Survey, Catherine Broadhead and Julie Hawkens (committee co-chairs) continue to plan new activities to engage our children and young people this summer. If you haven't completed the survey, do it now – see link below. Catherine and Julie need to know when our kids and grandkids will be on the Ridge and what activities are of most interest. After answering the questions on the survey, hit "Done" at the end. Tentative plans include a day camp the week of July 28th and/or August 4th. Keep those dates in mind as you think about next summer. **Please complete the survey. It takes less than 5 minutes.** <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/ZC9YRHG>

Interested volunteers, please contact Catherine Broadhead at Catherine.Broadhead@gmail.com.

The **Fire Safety Committee** was so active last fall to get the 7th Ridge fire road cleared and functional for use in an emergency that there is not a lot of additional news to report. They will provide information this summer on fire safety including the need to have working fire extinguishers in our cottages at the ready, if needed! Again, much appreciation goes to Alan Abel, Joanna Walker, John Powell and others on the road clearing crew to help us be better prepared for a fire emergency this summer!

The **Land Use Committee** met in September. Members of the committee have looked into establishment of a not-for-profit organization to purchase parcels of land adjacent to the Ridge as well as derelict Ridge cottages. While the committee as a whole has not met recently to consider next steps, Lucy and I received an informal legal opinion that suggests it may be a challenge to establish a bona fide charitable purpose for such an organization. Other options under consideration are on-going vigilance, keeping in touch with owners of the land and continuing relationships with those involved in local and regional land conservation efforts. When the committee meets again (Lucy Livingston, Chair, Esty Collet, Margie Conner, Jon Heydenreich and John Powell), there will be more information to share.

As mentioned in my holiday letter, the dwelling formerly owned by Roy Wright was purchased last fall by Lucy Livingston and she promptly had it torn down. Our appreciation for this generous and good deed will doubtless be renewed when we don't see the cottage this summer!

The **Ridge Finances Committee**, which I chair, met in early February. We looked at several ways to achieve a balance between regular annual revenue and routine annual expenses. The option we agreed upon to achieve this objective will be offered for consideration and discussion later this spring and summer.

In other news and developments...

Willows Property Tax Reduction. As of this writing, Joanna Walker is continuing to work with great diligence and persistence to submit our application to the Board of

Assessors for a reduction of property taxes on the 5 acre Willows property purchased a year ago. We plan to include with our application the assessment done by Lattrell Ecological Consulting which assessed the value at less than 10% of the value used for tax purposes. Joanna will submit our application before the April 1st deadline.

Northfield Golf Course and Pool. In late January, Ed Snow and family completed their purchase of the Northfield golf course, swimming pool and other properties on this 125 acre parcel. The Snows, owners of Snow & Sons Landscaping, of Greenfield, have a long-standing working relationship with the school, including maintenance of the golf course since 2011. They plan to start the golf season as soon as weather permits. Golf memberships are available at a discounted price through the end of March. Membership information is available on their Facebook page and they can be contacted at northfieldgolfcourse@gmail.com or 413-498-2432.

Schell Bridge. The Selectboard of the town of Northfield has decided to pursue Schell Bridge replacement with a bridge which will enable bicycles and pedestrians to cross the Connecticut River at the location of the present closed bridge. The Town Selectboard has approved the bridge replacement project and Friends of Schell Bridge has supported their request to Mass DOT to seek approval of this project and to seek funding which is supposed to be available. There is no recent news to report since December.

Moore Tennis Courts. Fundraising efforts to pay for remaining restoration of the Moore Tennis Courts this spring are going well. While there is still a need for additional contributors, the amount raised so far is very encouraging. As mentioned in the last letter, an agreement is in place between NCF (actually Northfield Campus, LLC a wholly owned organization NCF established to maintain the campus) and 'Friends of Northfield Tennis' to get the courts in playing condition for use this summer. The work is being done by Wilson and Lawrence, the organization in New Hampshire that has cared for these courts for decades.

For those not familiar with this project 'Friends of Northfield Tennis' is an ad hoc group set up by Lucy Livingston and me to get Moore Courts restored. NCF has been very cooperative and we appreciate the spirit of helpfulness that has made all this possible.

As mentioned above, additional contributions will help us reach our goal. Contact Lucy if you're interested. And whether you are a donor or not, please enjoy the courts this summer – as a player, spectator or both!

Remember the Youth Activities Survey. Appreciation goes to everyone who has already completed the survey. According to Catherine, your information is essential and very helpful. Here's the link again, <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/ZC9YRHG>

Click on it, answer the questions and press 'Done'. Catherine and Julie will really appreciate your feedback. Your information makes their planning possible. There will be volunteer opportunities for parents, grandparents and others to help these activities be a great success! Please contact Catherine about your interest as a volunteer. Thank you Catherine and Julie for working to organize these fun activities for children and grandchildren this summer!

July 4th Parade and Lobster Fest. Please save the date for the Rustic Ridge 4th of July parade and annual Lobster Fest.

Annual Meeting and Ridge Picnic. Our Annual Meeting and Ridge picnic will be on Saturday, August 2nd this year.

New Rustic Ridge Logo. At the request of the Board, Catherine Broadhead has been doing the legwork to develop a new logo for the Rustic Ridge. She's had several designs drawn up which have been discussed, tweaked and re-worked for the board to help it settle on the best look for our new logo! Among other things, we plan to use it on T-shirts for those involved in youth activities this summer. (Adult sizes may be available, too.) Thank you, Catherine, for your creativity, patience and persistence! More logo news to follow soon!

Annual Dues. Attached to this letter is a form and instructions for payment of annual dues. Please take a look, follow the guidelines and send in your dues. Thanks!

If you have questions or want additional information about anything, please let me know. For those still in the grip of this harsh winter, take heart - spring is coming ...and summer, too!

Respectfully,

Doug Denise,
President