



# Friends of Webster Trails

FWT Newsletter - Spring 2021



Old Car in Four Mile Creek Preserve (dk photo)

## Upcoming Events

### **Saturday April 17 – Two Projects, Pick one**

#### Trash Pickup on Hojack Trail

North Pond Parking Lot on Orchard at Holt 9:00  
Bring sturdy gloves and footwear. (info 298-3404)

#### Make Trail, Build Bridge at State Road Nature Preserve

Meet on State Road, west of Salt Road at 9:00  
Bring shovel, wheelbarrow, lopper, mattock, long sleeves, and gloves. (info 329-9063)

### **Saturday May 15<sup>th</sup> -Trail benching**

**Big Woods at Pellet Road 9:00**

**Gloves, shovel, rakes, water**

### **Saturday June 19<sup>th</sup> – Trail raising**

**Hojack Trail at Drumm Road (9:00)**

**Gloves, Shovels, rakes, water**

### **Editor's Comments – John Boettcher**

We are back! Last year we could not have any of our usual workdays to take care of the trails. With the increased use they received last year, they certainly need it. Hope you come out and help. Trail Chairman Craig Hurbut has put together a list of work days for 2021 (see article). I have listed a few of the early ones in upcoming events.

The feature story in this newsletter deals with the abandoned cars in the Four Mile Creek Preserve. See steward Dennis Kuhn's article.

### **President's Column – Anna Taylor**

It is wonderful to have an opportunity to write this column for the FWT Spring Newsletter because what is spring after all, but a fresh start, a new growing season

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and an opportunity to rebuild and refocus. We are emerging from our winter, and hopefully the pandemic. Over the past year we have seen increased use of our trails and open spaces. We are so grateful to have such beautiful spaces in our town, just a short walk, bike or a car ride away from home. Minutes from leaving your driveway you can step onto to a trail that will take you into the woods and away from your worries for 20 mins or for hours. Over the past year many people reached out to us noting how much they loved our trails. It is reaffirming to hear so many of you share this love, thank you for your messages.

For 2021, Friends of Webster Trails is reemerging too. We will be restarting our Monthly Trail Work Parties, and our Habitat Committee will be getting back to work. We are even planning events again. Note, all of these activities will be following all COVID protocols, with safety first and foremost in mind.

Given the heavy use of the trails in 2020 we have many trails that will need our help this year and we in turn will need your help. We ask that you join us for one of our monthly Trail work parties. Consider it as a family activity, bring a friend, or simply show up solo and share your time with us. Please refer to our Website and Facebook page for upcoming event dates and spread the word to anyone you know who might enjoy participating.

In 2021 FWT is also embarking on exciting initiatives which include collaborating with Webster Parks and Rec, Wegmans, McAllister signs and our great New mapping volunteers on a refresh of our Passport and Trail Maps. A second initiative that we have kicked off is a dialogue on Habitat restoration looking at a potential future plan for the planting of native trees and shrubs in our open spaces.

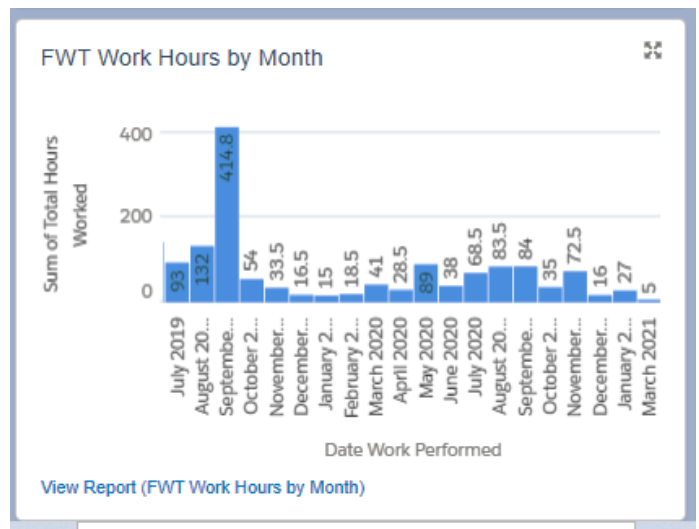
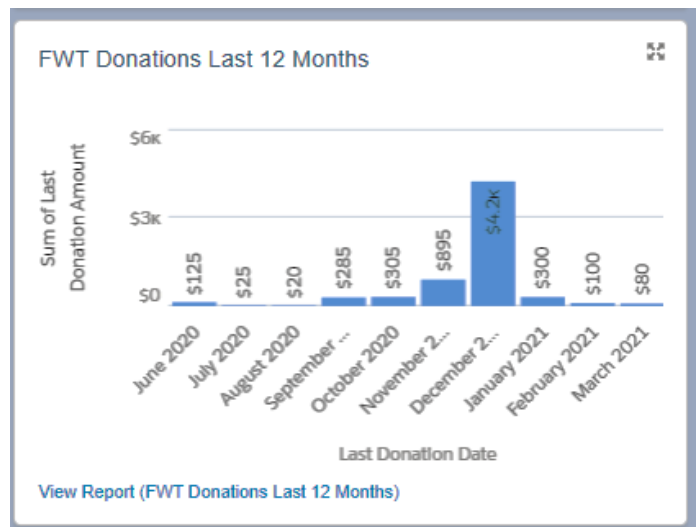
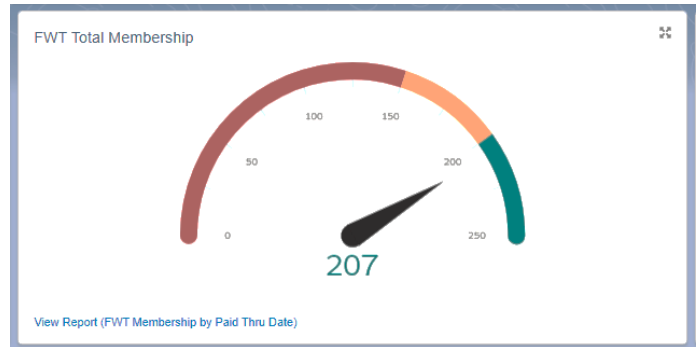
This spring we are hopeful and excited for 2021. We look forward to seeing you out on the Trails this year, hiking, biking and hopefully at an FWT Trail work party!

### Membership News - Denise Billsback

Our goal for membership was to reach over 200 memberships. We have been pretty steady over the last year of just over 200 memberships. There has been a steady trickle of new memberships. Sadly Michael Allan Johnson, a local pharmacist, passed away this fall. He loved to walk the trails in Webster. Many of his family

and friends donated to the Friends of Webster trail in 2020 and we are very grateful.

Looking ahead there will be an update to the Wegman passport. Stay tuned to our website and facebook page for the launch. Think about completing your Wegman passport for one of your 2021 goals.



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*May 15<sup>th</sup>* – Two Projects at same location - Pellet Road entrance to Big Woods and WRNP.  
 Benching of trail into Big Woods  
 Reroute steep white trail into WRNP

*June 19<sup>th</sup>* – Hojack Trail at Drumm Road  
 Raise trail east of Drumm with hardening gravel.

*July 17<sup>th</sup>* – Four Mile Creek Preserve  
 Install boardwalks on the many wet spots of the red trail identified previously.

*August 21<sup>st</sup>* – Chiyoda – Install drainage pipes (2) and add gravel to trail.

*September 18<sup>th</sup>* – WRNP – Add stone to sections of blue and orange trails and drainage work on orange trail.

Right now, many of the trails are muddy and we are identifying the worst spots. Each year the Town of Webster obtains gravel for the trails and we will be hauling a lot of gravel this spring and summer. If you spend time on the Hojack Trail just east of Drumm Road, you will see ditches have already been dug to drain water away from the trail.

We will be working on a brand-new trail that begins on State Road. Starting at the intersection of State and Salt roads, go west a few hundred feet and you will see the start of a trail. There are no kiosk or signs yet and only a small part of the entire planned trail has been carved out. That is the purpose of our workdays – to make these things happen!

We appreciate the community’s involvement in maintaining the Webster trails. If you check out other trails around Monroe County, I think you will find that Webster really does enjoy a lot of well-kept trails and parks. Let’s keep it going!

**Hojack Trail – J. Boettcher, M. Steiner**  
 “Best It’s Ever Been.” Those of the words of a recent biker on the Hojack Trail between Klem and Van Alstyne. This section of trail has been troublesome for several years. A large portion of the trail was nearly impassable due to poor drainage. In early 2020, the Webster Highway department raised this area but the large stone used made it unfriendly to walkers and bikers. Covering

### Treasurer’s Report – Bill Polito

For: March 2021		
	YTD	YTD Prior Yr
<b>Income Statement</b>		
<b>Donations</b>		
Memberships - PayPal	\$437	\$413
Memberships - Checks	\$585	\$765
Amazon	\$31	\$24
United Way		
Scavenger Hunt	\$302	
Interest Earned on Saving		
United Church of Christ		
Roc Trails		\$1,000
Roc & Soul		
Webster Library		
TrailsRoc		
Michael Johnson Donations	\$300	
<b>Total Donations</b>	<b>\$1,655</b>	<b>\$2,202</b>
<b>Expenses:</b>		
Community Arts Day		
IRS Filing Fee	(\$100)	(\$40)
Supplies		(\$105)
McAllister sign		
PayPal Fees	(\$25)	(\$22)
Wegman’s, Chipotle, Guidas		
Weekend Printer		
Site 5		
Papa Reggios	(\$32)	
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>(\$157)</b>	<b>(\$167)</b>
<b>Net Cash Movement</b>	<b>\$1,498</b>	<b>\$2,035</b>

### Trails Chairman Report – Craig Hurlbut

I bet all of us will be happy to return to our normal pre-Covid lives this summer! The pandemic caused people to get outside more often, and I guess that is one positive outcome. Accordingly, we at FWT are excited to announce our 2021 trail workdays all of which take place on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of the month at 9:00 am. Please consider coming out to help! We will follow NYS Covid guidelines in place at the time of the event.

*April 17<sup>th</sup>* – Two projects at different locations.  
 Hojack (trash pickup) meet at North Ponds Parking  
 State Road (small bridge) meet on State Road west of Salt Road.

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this area with smaller stone would solve the problem. It was estimated that 60 tons of stone (8 truckloads) would be required. FWT would pay for the stone and delivery but this left the problem of how to spread it out. Spreading out 60 tons of stone was a big job and beyond the work of a few volunteers. Fortunately, one of us (MS) is not only steward for this section of trail but also works for RG&E (owners of the land) and offered to arrange a crew and equipment to do the job. In addition to the spreading, the crew also did some ditching on the side to help drain water from the trail.



Hojack between Klem and Van Alstyne Nov. 2020 (jb photo)

### **Tree Falls on Hickory Bark Platform – Sharon Galbraith, John Boettcher.**

Shortly after Thanksgiving 2020 a large tree adjacent to the platform in Hickory Bark Woods fell over doing major damage to the gathering place. A little over one year ago this trail was opened with a well-attended ceremony. The platform and long boardwalk were built by Eagle Scouts and the project funded by the Friends of the Webster Public Library. Just a few weeks earlier, the

FWT Board following COVID precautions held its monthly meeting on the platform. The repair will be done soon with cost estimated at \$1500.



Hickory Bark Platform Oct 2019 (jb photo)



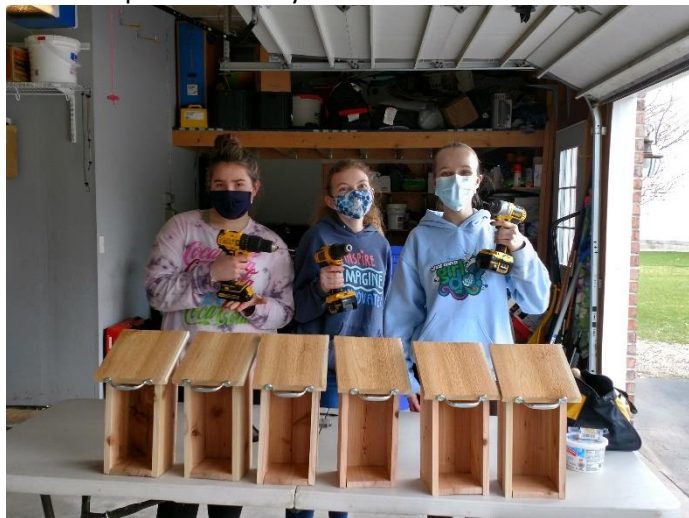
Hickory Bark Platform Nov 2020 (jb photo)

### **Boxes for FWT Flyers – Craig Hurlbut, Bud Gearhart, Denise Bilsback**

Talk about a nice coincidence. A few months back Bud noticed that we could use more boxes for our FWT flyers and he would be willing to put them up and keep them stocked. Denise mentioned that these have been very effective at not only orienting people as to the trails in Webster but also bringing in new FWT members. The color flyers are made at substantial discount by Dave Ekler of the Weekend Printer here in Webster. About this same time, Craig had been looking for a project for his daughter and other Girl Scouts. "On a cool Saturday

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morning in late March the team assembled in a parent's garage. Provided with the supplies and little parental direction, along with much goofing around, the young ladies used hammers and drills to build the boxes. It was a fun and productive day."



Scouts with Flyer Boxes (ch photo)

### Cars Along the Creek – Dennis Kuhn

As the steward of Four Mile Creek Preserve I get to meet lots of nice people who enjoy hiking the many different trails on the 72 acre parcel. Most people thank me for helping to make the trails as nice as they are. Some people share their knowledge of the trails by informing me of a tree across the trail that needs removing. Others enjoy telling me about the bird species that make FMC part of their habitat seasonally or otherwise. A few others can't wait to tell me about a fish they caught or a hiking experience that was memorable.

Over the years I have often been asked if I have any knowledge about the many abandoned cars that can be found along the red trail. My answer to all of them has been, "No, I wish I did."

Last fall on a sunny day in late October I was refreshing the blazes on the red trail when a man walking two dogs noticed that I wasn't the typical hiker since I was carrying a can of red paint and was off the trail. He thought I might know something about the abandoned cars. I gave him my usual reply, "I wish I did because it's a common question, but the answer is 'No!'" He introduced himself and explained that he always had a fascination with old cars and wondered if I would like to take a hike sometime and he would share his knowledge of the cars at FMC with me. My answer was a profound "Yes!"

We took that hike a few weeks ago and I took lots of pictures and lots of notes. Here's some of what we found:

1951 Chevrolet Styleline Deluxe Bel Air  
1961 Ford 500 Galaxy Club Victoria  
1959 Nash Rambler  
1959 Chevy Bel Air  
1954 pastel rose Colored Plymouth Belvedere Suburban  
1949 Green Nash Airflyte ( the crowd pleaser of the bunch)

There are many other cars or remnants of cars although they're not easily recognizable even by someone with an eye for antique vehicles.



One of the sadder wrecks (dk photo)

After my tour of the property with vintage car enthusiast, Mike Hanley, I visited Dave Eckler. Dave and other family members are currently the owners of an 18 acre parcel that adjoins FMCP. Norma Platt, the FWT Habitat Preservation Chair, suggested that I contact Dave because as a lifetime resident of Webster he has some direct knowledge of the abandoned cars and how they got to their final parking place.

According to Dave the cars were driven onto the property from Lake Road across a bridge that accessed farmland where the cars were last driven. It seems that some local youths decided to create a racetrack somewhat off the beaten path to have some fun cavorting around the open fields that were available at the time. If you traverse the land as it is now, you'll have to use your imagination to see a relatively treeless landscape that existed sometime in the nineteen fifties or early sixties. Nevertheless, the youths of the day had a

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ton of fun going around in circles until they ran out of gas or had a flat tire or wrecked the transmission. Who knows how it all ended!

The cars are a testament to the fun-loving youth of the time. I hope no one was hurt and I hope that the cars remain as they are. They're fun to look at and they will be there for years to come if left to the elements. Let me know if you have any knowledge of who the former owners were.

Happy trails to you....

### **FWT Habitat Preservation Committee -Norma Platt**

Please join us for the 2021 Habitat Preservation season!  
(COVID-19 protocols)

Good company  
Good exercise  
Making a difference

The FWT Habitat Preservation Committee consists of a dedicated group doing our best to keep Webster Open Space friendly to native species and free of invasive plants and insects.

Covid-19 put a stop to all work last year. In 2021, we'll ease back in knowing we will be outside and socially distant.

We will work on projects that are doable, given our resources. We'll spend the major portion of our efforts on general maintenance, removing invasive plants: Garlic Mustard along the Bird Sanctuary Trail and the Yellow Trail at Four Mile Creek. (To clear the 'seed load,' we need to revisit an area yearly. Our work on Lake Road has shown us that this takes at least five years!) We'll sweep through the Gosnell Big Woods looking for recurring invasive plants such as European Barberry, Black Swallowwort and Ailanthus.

We will assist the Town in keeping our meadows open. This is a large-scale effort where the Town mows annually to remove woody plants. We assist by clearing the spots that the mower misses-- near trees, edges and fence-lines.



**FWT habitat preservation workers in 2019 (np photo)**

Checking the Eastern Screech Owl and Wood Duck nest boxes in WRNP, Gosnell and Four Mile Creek will be a couple of rewarding outings. (See the article in this newsletter.)

During the summer season, we do fieldwork on Friday mornings. We choose areas that are mostly free of invasives – and try to keep them that way.

To participate, contact Norma Platt directly [normap1@rochester.rr.com](mailto:normap1@rochester.rr.com) or use the FWT website.

### **Screech Owl and Wood Duck Nest Boxes – Norma Platt**

One of the benefits of being involved in the FWT Habitat Preservation Committee is finding what's been going on in the 6 owl and duck nest boxes that are located in the Webster Open Spaces. We take, very seriously, the responsibility of being good stewards for nature. In this case, we need to monitor and clean the boxes.

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Eastern Screech Owls and Wood Ducks both breed in tree cavities. They will also use nest boxes that resemble these cavities. The boxes we use are high-end cedar dwellings made to specifications from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology <https://nestwatch.org/>. These boxes were made and installed in 2013 by Eagle Scout candidate Sullivan Easley [FWTwebsite](#)). A key design feature is the size of the opening, which prevents use by larger creatures. The nest boxes are located on long poles away from trees and are fitted with a predator guard. It is important to site the boxes in an appropriate habitat and away from competing alien invasive Starlings and House Sparrows,

Here are some images from this year that describe how we go about looking and the cool stuff we found.

First thing: we only look in the boxes out of the nesting season. Wood Ducks use the boxes in spring and early summer. If you look on the ponds at Whiting Road or Gosnell, you may be lucky enough to see mom and her brood. Eastern Screech Owls nest starting in February and take about 2 months to raise their family.



Checking box in Whiting Road Nature Preserve (np photo)

Second: We have to really work to look in the nest boxes. We schlepp an 8-ft ladder up to half a mile

(up/down trails) to a nest site.

When we're lucky, we find evidence that an Eastern Screech Owl or Wood Duck has been using the box



Screech Owl in nest box (it's facing away) (np photo)



Wood Duck down and eggshells (np photo)

For an Eastern Screech Owl, there will be pellets (hocked-up fur and bones) or feathers from avian prey. This year we were really lucky and found a roosting owl. It's facing away with its eyes closed. We were worried that the intrusion would be harmful, so we quickly took this picture, closed the box and moved away. It didn't act disturbed, emerge from the box or fly away.....so we're going to believe that things are OK.

Evidence of occupation by a Wood Duck is down from the adult's breast and bits of eggshell.

Sometimes there are surprises like the year we found a Black-capped Chickadee nest still containing an egg. Or a box full of moss/grass/leaves that we attributed to a Flying Squirrel. Or, this year, the mystery of a 2-inch layer of small twigs (we think

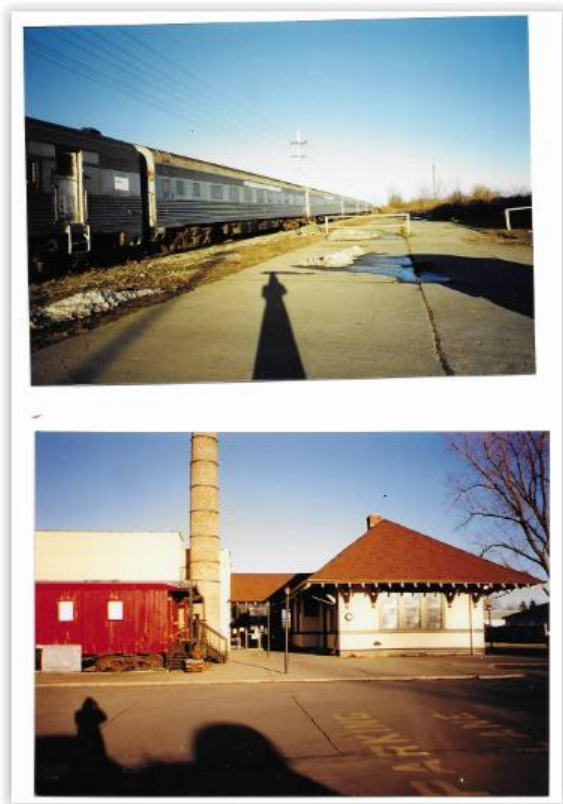
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it may be the start of a House Wren nest...they use sticks and nest in a cavity).

### History Tidbits from the Files (John Boettcher)

I got a bunch of newspaper clippings from FWT President Shari Gnolek. The outside of the folder said FWT 1999-2000 and I thought them sufficiently interesting that I've summarized the various topics below.

Hojack Railroad – Below is a photo of a passenger train at the station in Webster. I cannot provide a date but it has to be prior to when the railroad shut down in 1964.



**Webster Hojack Station and Train (pre 1964)**

Devil's Cove – Webster Post (11/96) reports the county's intention to buy this isolated 10 acres of the Bay just south of Inspiration Point. A neighbor objects and predicts trespassing.

Open Space – A series Supervisor Cathryn Thomas's columns in the Webster Herald from 1999 to 2001. Open space is part of a comprehensive plan for Webster which mentions many natural areas including Vosburg Hollow, Finn park area, Devil's Cove, Sandbar and the well fields. Thomas is looking for volunteers for open space committee and provides a survey for community input.

Details about the plans for the 50-acre Finn Park with 30 designated for recreation. Town hires Behann Associates to develop open space plan.

Vosburg Hollow – Webster Post and Webster Herald articles from 1999-2000. Town owned land accessed from Wahl driveway. FWT designed trails, markers, and signs. Eagle scout projects for bridges, boardwalks, and benches. FWT president is Sue Klassen. A letter from a neighbor is not in favor of this preserve.

Hojack Trail in 1999 – Below is a photo of what the Hojack Trail looked like in 1999. Just a footpath.



**Hojack Trail (approx. 1999)**

Hickory Bark Woods - In a very strongly worded opinion in the Webster Herald of 6/27/2001, Cinthia Kindle argues against the disruption of the 10 acres of climax forest at the corner of Hard Rd. and 104. The remnant of this forest is currently called Hickory Bark Trail.

Bird Sanctuary Trail – Articles from Herald and Post dating from 2000-2003. This crescent of land was originally intended by NYS to provide access to Xerox from 104 but was abandoned and given to Webster with the proviso that it not be developed.

FWT 2001-2002 – Four articles from Post and Herald about trail workdays with photos of members. Don Baird is president at the time.

Big Woods Gilman Talk 2007 – A Webster Herald article of 6/6/2007 promoting a talk by Bruce Gilman and his findings regarding the "old growth" Big Woods.

Midnight Trail – Single article in Post from 2007 relates the town's purchase of the 23 acres for \$186,000.



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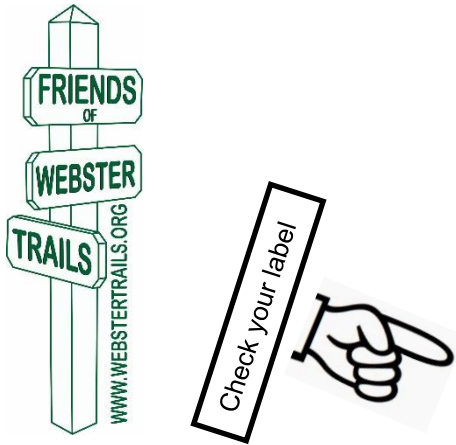
Supervisor Nesbitt says town has acquired more than 1,000 acres of open space.

Wegmans Passport Program – This clipping is from the D&C of 6/28/2009 and might be at the start of the program. The Webster areas mentioned in this article are Arboretum, North Ponds Park and Webster Park.

### FWT Leadership 2021

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Friends of Webster Trails  
Webster Community Center  
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**Friends of Webster Trails** advocates for the preservation of the natural character of Webster's open space lands. We promote through sensible management, education, and low-impact access. We advise the Parks and Recreation Department and assist by planning, maintaining and promoting recreation trails in the Town of Webster.

**The Friends of Webster Trails newsletter is published each Spring and Fall**

Editor: John Boettcher

Send any submissions, questions or corrections to:

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