



Oak Ridge MST Committee

February 24, 2026, meeting minutes

The Oak Ridge MST Committee met on February 24th, 2026 at 6pm at Town Hall.

Members present: Bill Bruce, Anne Steele, Martha Pittman, Moses Perry, Stephanie Ferrell, Mike Kimel, Joel Deaton, and Jeff Richter. Guests present: Jackson Heltsley, Andrew Heltsley, Jim Harton

Minutes from the November 18th 2025 and January 27th 2026 meetings were approved.

Anne Steele was elected as Chair and Stephanie Ferrell was elected Vice-Chair for 2026.

Jackson Heltsley presented his Eagle Project to the committee. Jackson has been working with Anne Steele and Mike Kimel as committee advisors on the project. He has researched and designed 4 interpretive panels to be installed along the Headwaters Trail. They will have photographs and information about the watershed, beavers, birds, and other wildlife. Along with his Eagle Scout information, the MST logo and QR Code will be incorporated. Martha Pittman will get high resolution files of the logo for Jackson. Each aluminum with vinyl graphics panel will be 2'x3'. He will hold workdays with other scouts on March 7th and March 22nd. He will provide the master graphic files to the Town so that they can be replaced or repaired in the future if damaged.

His father Andrew Heltsley asked about other projects available and after discussion, he was referred to Brock Dunnigan – Oak Ridge Park Superintendent.

PROJECT UPDATES

Headwaters Trail: Joel thanked Anne and Galen Steele for filling in and repairing the ground at the main beaver den at the bridge. Only current task in that area is removal of the low small dam in the area where the stepping stones were placed (now removed) while the area was flooded. He also reported that there are several new dens in the Beaver Alley area so the beaver community is thriving and healthy but no threat to the trail.

Bill has 2 groups of yard type signs made for placement. 1. Dogs must be leashed. 2.

Parking: locations of both the Linville Rd and Goodwill Church Rd trail head locations and reminder for folks to keep off the grass if parking on any street. Brock will place them at appropriate locations.

Carriage Cove and Pemberly Estates:

Bill led a discussion of the north creek bridge location and used GIS to familiarize the committee members with the 2 easement locations and access. Bill will request additional survey marking and the committee will continue outreach efforts to adjacent property owners. After outreach is concluded and survey flags are in place, a decision will be made on the final location of the bridge. While that is being determined, work will continue on the Carriage Trace Loop to clear recent undergrowth and remove leaves that are obscuring the trail tread. Access to that area is at the end of Grey Fox Dr.

It was reported that Town Council vacated the Ashford easement at their February 5th meeting.

REPORTS:

Friends of the MST: Martha provided an update. Current membership is 2048. Last year, there were about 41,000 volunteer hours reported. The annual Gathering will be held April 9-12 in Ashville. The western terminus marker will be unveiled on April 9 at Kiwohi (formerly Clingmans Dome). Excursions will be released to registrants the second week of March. Hanging Rock to Danberry off-road route has been approved and is in the permitting process. Spring hiking season is starting with 2 hikers registered for our campsite and one woman hiker has reached out for Trail Angel support while in our area.

2027 will be the 50th anniversary of the MST and celebrations will be organized and held across the state. The committee discussed ideas for participation in the celebration and one suggestion was a volunteer recognition event.

Community outreach: Stephanie will get information to Genevieve for a Facebook post and also send out an email about our next workday on March 7th. We will work on the Carriage Trace Loop meeting at Grey Fox Dr. at 9am.

Jim Harton thanked us for our efforts to preserve the Ashford easement and encouraged us to continue seeking a path forward working with neighbors and Summerfield.

Adjourned.

Respectfully submitted by

Martha Pittman, member

