

**Minutes for the Regular Meeting of the
Walpole Conservation Commission
February 3, 2020**

Members Present: Alicia Flammia, John Peska, Jackie Kensen, Lewis Shelley, Steven Dumont, Jean Kobeski (Recording Secretary)

Members Absent: Laura Hayes, France Menk, Cheryl Mayberry (Selectboard Liaison)

Alternates Present: Myra Mansouri, Elaine Heleen, Kelli Wilson

Guests: Helen Dalback, Tom Beaudry, Michael Nerrie, Ray Boas

Call to Order: Alicia called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM in Town Hall.

Review and Approval of Minutes: Lew moved; Steven seconded, and all approved the minutes of 1/6/2020.

New Business: Helen Dalback, Director of the Hooper Institute, gave an update on Hooper activities. She stated that they now serve 251 students. The gardens at Walpole Elementary School produced 1700 pounds of vegetables to serve in the schools. They participate in the Art After School program and have partnered with Distant Hill Gardens on events and speakers.

Helen expressed an interest in partnering with the WCC, perhaps on trail walks or other programs. Alicia stated there is a lot of trail work on the docket, and this is an area in which the two could collaborate. Alicia will send the Hooper Forest Rapid Assessment to Helen. She also said that the lean-to needs some work, and this is an area where the WCC and Hooper can collaborate, as well.

Michael Nerrie of Distant Hill Gardens (DHG) came to report on their events and activities and brainstorm ways they and the WCC could collaborate since much of what they do is in accordance with the Walpole Conservation Plan. First, he explained DHG is working with National Grid to conserve wildlife habitats through bird netting and shrub management. He explained that Antioch interns are also working with them.

DHG is involved in Spark Net, a national research project using coverboard to make a database of animals.

DHG is planning a BioBlitz workshop. They will have someone from Antioch teach how to do BioBlitzes.

Alicia explained that short-term trailwork is a priority of the WCC. WCC, DHG, and the Hooper agreed that the three organizations could work together to plan events and do some of this trailwork together. Lew suggested having a trail building workshop. John suggested getting student-volunteers to help. Helen said they could center the work around National Trails Day (date unknown at meeting time) Michael said he could publicize any event that is planned through the Cheshire County Conservation District. Just send him notices of any event.

Alicia said the WCC would be glad to endorse DHG and Hooper Institute events.

Tom Beaudry, Walpole Liaison to the Cheshire County Conservation Commission, discussed the relicensing of the dams in Vernon, Wilder Pool, and Bellows Falls. He presented a video showing erosion along the river (on YouTube: "Erosion on the Connecticut River") and explained that the Connecticut River Conservancy has asked every town to pass a resolution at Town Meeting supporting the relicensing. Alicia read a copy of the resolution (and forwarded it to the WCC membership). The Walpole Selectboard supports the resolution but has asked that the WCC bring it up at the meeting. John moved to approve the resolution as written, and Jackie seconded the WCC recommendation to support the resolution. Alicia will forward this recommendation to the Selectboard so it can be read at the March 14th Town Meeting.

Tom Beaudry also gave an update on the work of the Cheshire County Conservation District (CCCD) to maintain healthy soil, clean water, wildlife habitats, and farm viability. He showed slides which explained the CCCD equipment rental program, pollinator habitat and Trout Unlimited. It also described various grants and scholarships that are available.

Ray Boas presented an idea about tree planting in town. The Selectboard has a list of trees to come down, and Ray proposed developing a plan to fundraise to buy more mature replacement trees. It was decided that the first step is to survey the trees in town; Alicia suggested that perhaps Laura and Mike Rau could drive through town and count trees of various species. Steven suggested possibly making this an Antioch student project. Ray will talk to the Selectboard. He also suggesting purchasing at least one and planting it during Old Home Days to kick off the project.

Alicia explained that Fritze Till and Ben Daviss plan to run then maintain a tree planting in town. They also have ideas for fundraising.

Tom Beaudry suggested that WCC meeting times be put on the Clarion calendar. John suggested that the Clarion create a long range events calendar, which can be consulted when planning future events to eliminate overscheduling on a particular date. Ray said he needs input.

Public Business

Report from the Chair: Duncan is official.

Treasury: Conservation Account- \$133,180.51
Forestry - \$35,283
Walker Road -\$3,549.92
Mason Non-expendable - \$17,936.85
Mason Expendable - \$431,529.22

Old Business

Alicia and Steven are the wetlands and streams subcommittee. Alicia said she attended a Planning Board meeting, and the board was supportive of putting a box on a permit asking people if they have a particular distance setback on the property.

Lew said they received two responses so far to the Walpole Gateway Survey.

Lew said a few things have been added to the kiosk: Leave No Trace and No Fires and Camping. Alicia stated that Lisa Murphy of the SW Regional Planning Commission said they could help the WCC with the mapping of trails.

Reservoir Dam Project: John reported that follow-up work needs to be done to get DES approval. A depth measurement of the reservoir needs to be taken and then reported to the DES before the culvert work is done. Ben Northcott said he would not do any more work without DES approval.

The Selectboard wants to set up another meeting with Fuss and O'Neill immediately after Town Meeting.

The letter requesting money from the town can be open-ended with no amount needed in the letter.

Other Business

Lew proposes that the WCC buy a projector. He will do the research and report at the next meeting.

Kelli will meet with Ryan Harrison who will show her how to set up the WCC website. She will set it up and put a PDF of the Conservation Plan on it.

Alicia said the WCC email needs to be set up.

Tom Beaudry offered to help Lew cut and clean up the oak tree.

John moved to adjourn; Jackie seconded, and all were in favor. The meeting adjourned at 9:05 PM.

The next meeting is Monday, March 2 at 7:30 PM in Town Hall.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jean Kobeski, Recording Secretary

** These minutes are in draft form until approved by the Commission on March 2.