

**Minutes for the Regular Meeting of the
Walpole Conservation Commission
January 3, 2022**

Members Present: John Peska, Laura Hayes, Steven Dumont, Peter Palmiotto

Members Absent: Alicia Flammia (chair), France Menk, Lewis Shelley

Seating of Alternates: Kara Dexter

Visitors Present: Cheryl Mayberry (Selectboard Co-Liason), Jean Kobeski, Recording Secretary, Alex Barrett of Long River Forest

Call to Order: John called the remote meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. This meeting was being recorded.

Review and Approval of Minutes: Kara asked that the December 6 minutes reflect that Annie Ewaskio and Guest were visitors to the meeting. With that addition, Steven moved to accept the December 6 minutes. Laura seconded, and all voted to approve the minutes.

Public Business: There was no report from the chair, treasury report, or correspondence this evening.

New Business: Town Property Recommendations - Alex Barrett

Hooper Forest: Alex Barrett of Long River Forest gave updates on the Hooper and Fanny Mason Forests. Alex reported that he has done a walk-through of the Hooper Forest. He wrote a proposal for work to be done, which was signed by Alicia. He stated that a forest inventory should be done first to determine trees and their quality, as well as invasives to address. He said the inventory should take 1 1/2 days of field work and would be done in the next 2-3 weeks. Then a management plan would be created.

Alex asked what the goal of the Hooper Institute is, and Cheryl explained that it is their hope that a timber harvest would be done so that revenue could then be used to support programs at the Institute. Alex said he does not know right now what harvesting opportunities are there but will have a better idea in a few weeks. John asked Alex for a possible timeline for the work. Alex promised in the proposal that a management plan would be finished within six months, which would mean June. Based on that plan, a timber harvest could be scheduled. He suggest putting the proposed work out to bid to maximize returns. Alex said a red pine harvest could be done in early summer and white pine in the late summer. Work should be done by the winter of 2022-2023. He said if the work needs to be done sooner, he could probably do that. John asked Cheryl if there was an urgency to get the work done. She said the Hooper board is hoping for a summer harvest, fall at the latest. They would like to have some sort of return before the end of 2022. She said that this is their goal but they want to do what is best for the forest.

Laura had a question about how funding works. She said that the Friends of the Hooper could apply for NRCS funding for the invasives. That would take a great deal of time and might not be possible this year. Would it be possible for the Conservation Commission to vote to fund the invasives work once they get an estimate from Alex? Cheryl said the WCC can decide how they want to spend their money. It would be "awesome" if the WCC could fund invasive work without reimbursement. That way, the Institute could save that money and it would not be taken out of the timber harvest revenue. Laura said it would be a great way for the Commission to help the Hooper Institute. Cheryl suggested that once the Commission has an estimate on the invasives work, they could have a conversation and vote on whether or not to help the Hooper. Laura stated that, if it's within

\$3,000 - \$4,000, that should be doable and would speed up the process.

Peter cautioned that, from what Alex has said so far, there may not be a lot of timber value from red and white pine out there. He suggested waiting until the management plan comes in, then reassess at that time. He said he looks forward to Laura's proposal to the Commission about funding the invasives work; it sounds like a valuable step the Commission could take.

Steven asked if Alex's management plan will give an estimate of revenue from each of the species or levels of harvest. He also wants to know if Alex will meet with the Hooper Institute board and WCC to talk about use of the forest (recreation, money, etc.) to determine the level of harvest. Alex said that is a necessary step.

John asked if the invasives and logging can be coordinated. Alex said invasives first then logging in early June. Taking care of invasives first would make logging easier, and it would be less that the loggers would need to deal with. John also asked where pricing of lumber is right now. Alex said it is very strong, at least until spring of 2022. Because it was a wet summer, a lot of logging did not take place; therefore mills are "very hungry."

John also asked if the Hooper Institute has goals in writing. Cheryl said it does not because stewardship of the forest was turned over to the Conservation Commission. The Commission will therefore take the lead on the management plan but the Institute board wants to set a priority of the timber harvesting. John asked if the Institute board is aware of Alex's rapid assessment. Laura said they have been given a copy.

Steven said he thinks the Institute should take the lead on setting goals - how the land should be used. Laura said that some members who attend Commission meetings also regularly attend Hooper meetings, so there is frequent communication between the two groups. Alex suggested the Commission host a walk-about of the Hooper property before any work is done. Timber harvesting will create a dramatic change to the property and he thinks the community should be aware of it.

Fanny Mason Forest: Alex has walked the trails with Peter and Lew in order to determine area to buffer, harvest, and expand trails. He said they need to plan out and mark trees for harvest. John asked Alex if he has data from the previous harvest. He said he has the previous management plan only. John asked Peter if they have the data; Peter said they would only have the cut forms. He said they could be looked up.

Alex said an aggressive invasive clearing would be necessary before harvesting. Peter asked for a timeline for Fanny Mason work. Alex said it would be this winter or early spring, depending on snow cover. He said it would be best to backburner Mason Forest because Hooper seems to be the priority right now.

Alex commended the Commission on the Gateway Walk-about. He thought it went very well. The Commissioners thanked him for his participation. They also thanked him for tonight's presentation.

Old Business

Nelson Town Forest: John asked Cheryl if there was an update since this topic was discussed at a Selectboard meeting. She said she believes the police are looking at it but has no further information.

Walpole Gateway Walk-About: There was agreement that the Walk-about went very well, and John stated that Alicia wrote a very good summary of it for the January *Clarion*.

Other Business

Walpole Trail Subcommittee: Steven reported that the committee notified Wendy Grossman that she was voted to be the Walpole representative to the Monadnock Regional Rail Trail Committee.

Steven has submitted an estimate request to Curry Printing for the printing of the maps. At present there are 6 maps; another map of the Table Rock Trail will be added. Steven said Curry uses regular printing paper for this type of work. It looks like waterproof paper will most likely be cost prohibitive, but they will include an estimate for that as well. Steven will forward the estimate when he receives it. John suggested putting a sheet of plexi-glass over the maps on the kiosks if regular paper is used.

Property Monitoring: Steven has begun work on the sign-up chart. He will contact Laura for some information he needs to include on his chart.

Reservoir Road: John has nothing new to add other than he is still waiting for some information from Mark Houghton. Mark is supposed to contact Fuss and O'Neill about possible alternatives to completely repairing or removing the dam. Cheryl stated she has not heard anything new but added that the Selectboard added a budget line for the Reservoir Dam in the Conservation Commission budget to address this engineering work. John stated it would be good to include this topic in Town Meeting for public input but he doesn't think it can happen this year.

Other: Kara concluded the meeting by stating she did some clean-up work at Mill Pond and enjoyed watching the eagle downtown!

With no further business, Peter moved to adjourn the meeting; Steven seconded. John adjourned the meeting at 7:44 p.m.

The next meeting will be virtual on Monday, February 7, 2022, at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jean Kobeski, Recording Secretary

*** These minutes are in draft form until approved at the February 7, 2022 meeting.