

**Minutes for the Regular Hybrid Meeting of the
Walpole Conservation Commission
April 4, 2022**

Members Present: Alicia Flammia, John Peska, France Menk, Peter Palmetto, Lew Shelley,
Laura Hayes, Steven Dumont

Members Absent: None

Alternates Present: Kara Dexter, Gary Speed

Visitors Present: Peggy Pschirrer (Selectboard Liaison), Alex Barrett, Wendy and Will
Grossman, Helen Dalbeck, Marcia Galloway, Jean Kobeski (Recording Secretary)

Call to Order: Alicia called the meeting to order at 7:08 p.m. This meeting was recorded.

Review and Approval of Minutes: Lew moved to approve the March minutes as written. John seconded, and all voted to approve.

Public Business

Report from the Chair: Alicia reported she attended the Rutgers class on dam removal. She stated as soon as the town receives the final report on the Reservoir Dam, they need to decided quickly to either correct or remove it because there are several sources of money for which they can apply. She feels they can even secure funding to remove the dam because of its high risk designation. Alicia said she could give a more detailed report of what she learned from the class at a later time. She also offered to make a presentation to the Selectboard; Peggy said she would pass along the offer.

Lew asked if there is a deadline for applying for the money. Alicia responded she does not know who the funders are or their application timelines. John asked if the class offered tips for grant writing and Alicia said it did. Peggy reminded the group that \$100,000 has been put into the town budget this year for emergency management, and dam mitigation is on the list.

Treasury Report: Conservation: \$190,138.61
Forestry: \$30,662.19
Walker Rd.: \$2,138.45
Mason Expendable: \$ 492,126.76
Mason Non-Expendable: \$21,002.42

Correspondence: Alicia received an invoice for \$250 for membership in the NH Association of Conservation Commissions. Lew moved to approve payment of the invoice for \$250 to the NHACC. John seconded, and all voted in favor of the payment.

Alicia received a stack of Easement Landowner Questionnaires from the Monadnock Conservancy. She said she originally thought she wanted to do these in order to get to know the properties better, but the job is daunting - too time consuming. Laura agreed and said these forms were not meant for towns which own numerous easements. She and Alicia discussed having a meeting with the Conservancy and answering their questions in conversation. Laura suggested inviting them to a Commission meeting to do this.

New Business: Alex Barrett from Long View summarized what he found in the Hooper Forest then referenced the draft of his Hooper Forest Management Plan that was emailed to

Commission members. He said there were four distinct areas. First, he said they will be able to do some commercial logging in red pine areas. There are areas of poor quality white pines. In the center of the forest are oak and hickory trees. He said with some work, a special oak and hickory forest can be created. He also said there is a swampy area with some black gum trees - rare for this area and a special wetland feature.

Alex then took questions and comments about the plan. He said Long View expedited the work to create the plan because the Commission wants to begin logging as soon as possible. Peggy noted three corrections/additions. First, this is Map 11, not 1. Second, Town Hall phone number is 603-756-3672. Third, she asked Alex to specify the owner as Town of Walpole - Hooper Trust.

Lew asked if this would be a winter or summer cut. Alex said the access road is in good shape so the red pine could be cut during the summer. White pine will be late summer due to the sensitive ground in that area.

Laura asked what Tom's estimate for invasives control is. He told her it is \$5,000. Lew asked if this would be the preliminary step. Alex said it would be and Laura expanded by saying that the invasives would be sprayed before any other work would be started.

Alicia asked Helen if she had any questions or comments. She said she enjoyed reading the plan and is looking forward to the work, particularly because it can be incorporated into lessons for students. She wants to know when things are happening because she plans to photograph and create a story about the process for presentation.

Kara asked if there would be skidders on the class 6 road. Alex said no, just log trucks. Skidders will have to cross the road though.

Peggy asked how long Alex expects the harvest to take. He said 4-12 weeks, depending on weather and machinery.

Laura asked Alex for next steps. He said he would make the corrections to the plan and send it to the Commission. He said he would send Tom's proposal for invasive control, which would take place during the second half of July or August. Then timber would be marked (1-2 days work), with Commission guidance. He would then prepare a prospectus, which would include financials, logging plan, and performance objectives. A showing would be scheduled to which prospective contractors interested in the wood would be invited. Alex would host that as part of administration. He would then give them a week to submit bids. The Commission would consider bids received and choose the contractor.

John said the Commission could discuss Alex's amended proposal at the May meeting, then decide whether to go forward with the request for proposals.

Peter asked if the Commission is in agreement to give Alex the green light to administer the sale. Alex has completed the plan they requested, and he will invoice them for that. He said they would have to enter another contract with Long View to mark the timber and prepare the prospectus. Peter made a motion to have Long View and Alex administer the sale so the job can be put out for bids. France seconded, and all voted to approve.

Alicia said that the Commission will work on procurement, deciding if they want sole sourcing putting the job out to bid.

Alex said he would send a document outlining both revenue and administration sides of the project. He stated timber tax is something the Commission needs to consider on the revenue side. He said invasive would cost \$5,000 and administration in the \$3,000 range. Alicia stated in past meetings the Commission said it would pay for the administration side, including invasive control, and the Hooper Institute would retain the revenue. She said they should take a vote on the invasive first for the record. Laura moved that the WCC fund the invasive work. France seconded the motion, and all voted in favor.

Lew asked who did the harvest at the Hooper Golf Club. Alex said Chris Ricci did according to a Long View Plan. Peter said the oversight of the project by a forester is critical to a logging project and will be included in administrative costs. Alex was thanked for his work.

Peggy thanked the Commission on behalf of the Hooper Institute for incurring the administrative costs of this project.

Old Business

Walpole Gateway Action Plan: Peter showed a survey he received from Chuck Shaw, which was completed in 1994 for George O'Brien, the landowner. He pointed out that the area where the Commission discussed putting parking is not on Gateway land. It belongs to the Bureau of Trails. Wendy reminded the group that they must get permission from the Bureau before doing any work on the state-owned Rail Trail. That includes cutting the grass. So Peter stated they will need to get permission to cut the grass to create their proposed parking spaces. Peter stated that, if they have to get permission to cut the grass, they should ask for permission to put in something more definitive. That could include a split-rail fence. He also said they should check the location of the kiosk; it may be on the Bureau's property. A discussion of boundary lines followed that discovery.

Steven suggested doing a walk-about to look for boundary markers but suggested the Commission have a new survey done of the land.

John asked Wendy what the Route 12 right-of-way to the side is. She did not know but suggested the Commission contact the DOT. Lew said he would reach out to the DOT in Keene. John said knowing that exact information would be helpful when going to the Bureau of Trails.

Peter asked if anyone has ever seen corners or markers on the property. No one has looked for them or seen them. Lew suggested talking to Chuck to see if he can show where his corner is. If they know that, it might help finding other markers. It would be better to try to find these before hiring a surveyor. Peter said they will probably need a survey of this property some time, but he said he would meet others for a walk-about now.

France suggested tallying the number of cars they see parked at the Gateway so they can determine just how many spaces they need to create. It was decided that, for the next month, commissioners would observe and note how many cars they see parked there at various times of the day. At next month's meeting they will discuss their findings.

On another Gateway topic, Peter said they need to hike down the trail to determine vehicle access. France, Peter, Alicia, and Lew will meet at 10:00 April 10 to do the hike.

Peter suggested talking to Long View about invasive control at the Gateway property.

Scenic Byways Funding: Alicia said she heard from the Scenic Byway Department of the DOT about grant funding which was requested in June, 2021. In the original letter of interest, money was requested for educational signage at the Gateway and an accessible walking trail. The DOT explained that money requested should fall within four categories:

1. Safety
2. Equity and Accessibility
3. Economic Strength
4. Climate and Sustainability

Alicia said what the WCC requested money for was more of a wish list rather than for concrete plans that had been made. At this time these ideas are probably more than the Commission wants to undertake, in light of current activities. At this time the group will not pursue funding.

Sponsor-A-Road: Kara presented the idea of the WCC sponsoring a 2-mile section of road in front of the Gateway for clean-up 4 times/year. Alicia asked Kara if she has more information about sponsorship. Kara will send her the information, and it will be discussed at the May meeting.

Town Website: Kelli has presented a proposal for \$1500 to get the WCC website up and running. France explained that Kelli will be available for a few months after it is up to make sure things are running smoothly. She also explained that it will be set up in such a way as to operate without a webmaster; anyone can post information on the website. Steven spoke in favor because he said they will not get a volunteer to do this work. Peter shared a concern about maintenance. Laura questioned the demand for a website. Alicia said the public wants WCC maps and trail days. She said people can get information about the WCC from the *Clarion* and *Walpolean* for free. Lew stated that the conservation commissions he knows that are most successful use a website a lot. France said websites are the most popular platforms and are easy to use. She feels that searching for the WCC on the town's website is difficult. Both Kara and Peggy feel the town website is easy to use. Peggy offered the example of the Hanover CC's "terrific" website, which is reached through the town website. Alicia is concerned who will update the website. Peter suggested looking at some examples of Kelli's websites.

No decisions were made about the website at this time. It will be discussed further at the May meeting. Perhaps Kelli could be invited to attend.

Other Business

Walpole Trails Subcommittee: Steven reminded the group that the Easement Monitoring training for WCC members will take place April 30. They decided to meet at 10:00. Richard Pendleton of the Monadnock Conservancy is available to lead the training. It was decided to monitor the Merriam Town Forest for the training.

Lew will lead a trail building/ maintenance workshop for interested Commission and Trail Committee members on either June 11 or June 18. The exact date has yet to be determined.

Rail Trail Maintenance Update: Wendy said the state has released the rail trail maintenance MOA - requirements for towns for trail maintenance. Wendy explained there are two major flaws: 1. It does not enable brush hogging and 2. There are onerous clauses for towns pertaining to recording, liabilities, etc. The Walpole Selectboard chose not to sign it. Peggy said it is a non-starter for small towns. She will write a letter to the state saying the plan is unworkable. Wendy said many groups associated with rail trails around the state concur. There is now an effort underway to schedule a meeting between the Rail Trail Collaborative and the Bureau of Trails to revise the agreement.

Lew asked how this plan will affect the grant. She doesn't feel it will.

Reservoir Road: John said they are still waiting for the meeting with Fuss and O'Neill, so there has been no further progress.

Other:

Alicia reported that there is another huge red oak down on the Mill Pond.

Alicia feels the Commission might benefit from the help of interns. She asked the membership to think of ways the WCC could use them, and this will be discussed at the next meeting.

Laura announced that the Commission is in violation of the easement in the Nelson Town Forest. The Commission is technically the landowner; therefore it is the WCC's responsibility to clean it up. Kara offered to do this and several commissioners asked to be notified when she plans to do this so they can help.

Peggy announced that the selectboard agreed to house the WCC maps in the corridor of Town Hall. She and Lew planned to look for a place to put the map case after the meeting.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

The next meeting will be Monday, May 2, 2022.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jean Kobeski, Recording Secretary

** These minutes are in draft form until approved at the May 2, 2022 meeting.