

**Minutes for the Regular Hybrid Meeting of the
Walpole Conservation Commission
Monday, June 6, 2022**

Members Present: Alicia Flammia, John Peska, France Menk, Peter Palmiotto,
Lewis Shelley, Laura Hayes

Members Absent: Steven Dumont

Seating of Alternates: Kara Dexter, Gary Speed

Visitors Present: Wendy and Will Grossman

Call to Order: Alicia called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

Review and Approval of Minutes: Laura moved to accept the minutes of the 5/2/22 meeting as written; Peter seconded, and all voted in favor. Motion passed.

Public Business

Report from Chair: Alicia received an email from Holly Gowdy informing the Commission about concerns on the Ballam Farm. There have been two washouts, which they believe resulted from heavy rains in July last year. They are working with the NRCS on this issue so they will receive partial funding from the USDA to address them.

One washout runs down from the bank into the river from the field furthest to the west. The second is in the central field near the lane that separates Ballam Farm from Malnati's farm land. When Christian Gowdy and an engineer from NRCS were looking at this one, they observed that it reoccurs. They looked at it in relation to the town well and wondered if there is some sort of issue with the underground pipes. They have asked Mark Houghton to take a look at this. Holly stated they don't want to spend government monies only to have another washout occur because of an underground pipe failure.

Correspondence: John reported the following correspondences:

- The Connecticut River Conservancy has started their spring donation drive.
- There is information about federal infrastructure money that might be used for well systems and the water system here in downtown.
- There are NH Charitable Foundation publications.
- The State of NH Project Administrators Authorization arrived for Wendy Grossman.

Treasurer's Report: Conservation: \$190,304.17
Forestry: \$23,237.14
Walker Road: \$2,140.31

New Business: Alicia received an email from Julie Rios at the library regarding a patron from Applewood who would like to address the Commission about sponsoring another community garden at another location in town. She stated the issues with the current garden at the Hooper Institute are accessibility and cost. The patron was unable to attend the meeting tonight but will write her proposal in an email and send it to the Commission for discussion.

Old Business

Wendy Grossman: RTP Grant Application and Match: Last year the WCC offered support and \$20,000 match money for the application and approval of a Recreational Trail Program (RTP) grant. It was to have been for a \$100,000 project. The Bureau of Trails approved a scaled-back \$55,000 project, which would have required an \$11,000 match. Recently the grant funds for use in 2022 became unavailable; the County, with whom they had worked on the grant application, and the Town of Walpole could not agree on how to implement the grant together. The matching funds approved by the Commission last year will not be used. The current plan is to resubmit a RTP grant application by June 17, directly and solely from the Town of Walpole, to fund the scaled-back project work in 2023. Wendy Grossman was authorized to serve as Project Administrator. Wendy distributed a map of the locations on the Rail Trail to be addressed, as well as photos of those areas. She explained the work to be done.

At the meeting Wendy requested that the Conservation Commission approve up to \$15,000 from the Fanny Mason Trust in matching funds, which can be adjusted later to reflect volunteer labor and any non-cash match contributions to the project. Along with the money match, she would need a signed Landowner Permission Form for Fanny Mason Forest, a \$25 fee, payable to the Treasurer, State of NH, for a new Natural Heritage Review to assess and mitigate impact on wildlife and plants, and a Letter of Support.

Laura made a motion to approve up to \$15,000 match money for the RTP grant. France seconded, and all voted in favor. Lew Shelley recused himself from the voting. The motion carried.

The Selectboard will write a Letter of Support and Alicia will write a letter authorizing the matching funds. She will also write a Letter of Support. Wendy will send her information to include in the letter as well as the form to sign, giving permission to work on the parking lot in Fanny Mason.

John moved to approve \$25 from the Conservation Savings Account for the Natural Heritage Review. France seconded, and all voted to approve the money.

Hubbard Property: Peggy stated she had a meeting with Dale Hubbard to discuss the use of his property behind the barn. Hikers, bikers, and snowmobilers use it, and he would like this arrangement to continue. He keeps the land cleared for this purpose. Wendy stated she does not know where that trail goes. Peggy said as soon as Dale returns from Tulsa, they plan to walk the trail and she invited the Grossmans to accompany them. Wendy asked about ownership of the property. Peggy stated that Dale's sons, Michael and Levi, are the owners and will be the contacts. Peggy said they would draw up a document stating that this land may be used by hikers, etc. Wendy proposed making signs directing hikers to the trail.

Laura asked for clarification of the land use. She said people are using the Hubbard land because the Rail Trail there is too wet. Will the grant address this issue? Wendy said that site is not included in the current grant project, but could be in the future. Hubbard wants people to use his land instead of the Rail Trail, which is owned by the state. Lew reminded the membership that the Rail Trail corridor is always there to go back to. Think of this as a temporary shift in what the Rail Trail corridor looks like. Peggy agreed, stating rail trail corridors often shift for a variety of reasons.

Special Use Permit and Brush Hogging: Wendy reports that they have found a way to legally brush hog the Rail Trail in Walpole. The Town of Walpole can apply for and get a Special Use Permit (SUP) for the season from the Bureau of Trails (BOT). She believes any contractors the Town of Walpole hires can be covered under the town's SUP. Swanzey is doing rail trail maintenance this year year under a SUP. The following items are required for application:

- A completed SUP application form signed by an authorized person from the town.
- \$100 application fee made out to Treasurer, State of NH
- A Certificate of Insurance

With France's help, Will and Wendy have looked at brush hogging contractors. Will explained they have look at various options, including doing the work themselves. They have talked to Mark Houghton and Mike Hubbard for pricing. A lengthy discussion ensued about availability of contractors, insurance, size of crews, etc. Trail volunteers need to clear the trail of major obstacles, such as downed trees. Chainsaws will be needed. Lew stated that to do chain saw work on state property, the worker must be certified by the state. He said he is certified and is willing to do that work. Lew asked if the SUP authorizes access to the trail by ATV or tractor. It would make going in with a chainsaw much easier so he wouldn't have to hike in with a chainsaw. Wendy will include that in the permit application.

France moved to authorize up to \$800 for brush hogging and \$100 for the Special Use Permit (to be signed by the Selectboard) to be paid for from Trail Expenses in the budget, as well as line items not regularly used. Peter seconded and all voted to approve the motion.

Alicia suggested that, whichever contractor is available should be hired to do the work. "Get it done."

John returned to the topic of the grant and asked about culverts. How many and will they need a permit for it? They will need only one new culvert; others will be cleaned out. As part of the grant application, the BOT wants information about culverts and the Grossmans can include detailed specifications they have already received from the state.

Kara thanked the Grossmans for all the work they have done.

Other Business

Easement Monitoring Subcommittee: Alicia has offered to be on that committee; Peter joined her. Laura said she could help when she can, when she has time. Perhaps Sam, who is not here tonight, would want to do this as well. Alicia will send out some emails later in the month to get the process started.

Trail Subcommittee Report: Lew reports there will be a workshop on June 18th at Mill Pond, possibly 9-12. He will send out an email with final plans. He also reported that the trail maps are in the shelving unit in Town Hall.

Reservoir Dam: No report

Other:

Kara stated she read the 2/6/20 selectboard minutes and discovered that the Commission is able to have three alternates in addition to the seven commissioners.

Peter presented 20 copies of the the conservation maps in addition to the large one. Cheryl took the large map to Town Hall to be framed and hung. Peter is now working on a zoning map.

Peter will send a letter of condolence to the Britton Family on behalf of the Commission.

Lew stated the Planning Board has requested the trail data that was used to produce the maps for their master plan. Lew will provide that information.

Alicia adjourned the meeting at 8:13 p.m.

The next meeting will be virtual on Monday, July 11, 2022

Respectfully Submitted,

Jean Kobeski, Recording Secretary

** These minutes are in draft form until approved at the July 11, 2022 meeting.