

**Minutes for the Regular Meeting of the
Walpole Conservation Commission
August 1, 2022**

Members Present: Alicia Flammia (Chair), John Peska (Vice Chair), France Menk,
Peter Palmetto, Lew Shelley

Members Absent: Laura Hayes, Steven Dumont

Alternates Present: Gary Speed, Kara Dexter

Alternates Absent: Samantha Loch

Visitors Present: Wendy and Will Grossman, Peggy Pschirrer (Selectboard Liaison),
Cheryl Mayberry (Selectboard Liaison), Jean Kobeski (Recording Secretary)

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

Review and Approval of Minutes: France asked that the last sentence of the last paragraph of the minutes under "Other" read: *France said she learned by investigating items as they come up.* Kara moved to accept the amended July 11, 2022 minutes. Peter seconded the motion, and all voted in favor.

Public Business

Report from the Chair: Peter and Alicia have been reconfirmed and have taken the oath.

Correspondence: The Commission received a copy of the NH Charitable Foundation Annual Report.

Treasury Report:	Conservation:	\$190,464.70
	Forestry:	\$23,260.96
	Walker Road:	\$2,142.12
	Mason Expendable:	\$442,512.85
	Mason Non-Expendable:	\$18,654.58

Lew asked what the expenses from the Forestry account were. Alicia said they were for invasive species control at the Hooper and Walpole Gateway, and management of the Hooper Timber Harvest. Alicia added that, if anyone wants to see any invoices, she would be happy to share them.

New Business: Alicia received a request to sign a Fair Hunting Permit to hunt and bait bear on town property. NH DES and Fish and Game allow hunting and baiting on state and private property with a signed permit. Alicia felt uncomfortable signing without a discussion among Commission members. The permit request was sent last week, so there was not enough time to meet with the Commission and return the form to the state by the August 1 deadline. She let it go.

Alicia asked for discussion on this issue from the group; perhaps they should have a policy in case it comes up again in the future. Peggy asked Alicia what land was involved in the request; she answered it was the Fanny Mason land. Lew asked if the individual is local; John said he is.

Gary explained that this is a highly regulated activity that this individual wants to do. By permitting such hunting, Fish and Game can get an idea of the numbers and quality of the bears being hunted. France asked what baiting is. Gary explained that it is putting out food to attract the bear. He then explained the baiting process and added that hunting and baiting bear can be done from September 1 through September 28. Then the site must be cleaned and bait removed. Alicia asked if other species can be baited. Gary said deer and coyote may be baited, with landowner permission. Copies of the permit are sent to Fish and Game and the landowner, and the hunter keeps one. John explained that Fish and Game regularly checks the site, usually every other day, and the hunter must have his permit posted at the site.

Lew asked what would happen if ten people request permits at the same time. Gary said it is up to the landowners to decide how many they want to permit to bait on their land.

The Selectboard actually signs the permit because the Town owns the land. The Commission can recommend that the Selectboard sign or not. John said it would be helpful to have more information about the specific site to make sure there are no other trails or recreational activities around there. Gary said the permit stipulates no baiting within 300' from a road, trail, or occupied dwelling. These regulations are listed on the permit. Kara referenced an episode of North Woods Law which showed Fish and Game visiting a bait site. She said it was very informative and recommended that interested commissioners look for it on YouTube.

To summarize the discussion, Peter stated that the Commission does not have agency to say no to a permit but can recommend that the Selectboard either sign or not sign. Alicia explained that in order to deny all baiting permits all the time, the Town would need to hold a public hearing and take a vote as a whole to forbid baiting on all town-owned property. Peter pointed out that, by issuing baiting permits, you know that the state will come in and inspect the sites and gather data about the animals. Gary said he doesn't see a reason not to grant a permit; the town has never had a problem with it before, and because Fish and Game regularly inspects and monitors the sites, they will contact hunters if there is any wrongdoing.

Wendy asked, if bears are eating donuts and sweets, as Gary earlier stated in his explanation of baiting, are they getting accustomed to human food? Would this cause a problem for people near their homes? Gary stated that it wouldn't because the baiting happens far enough away from dwellings, and where they are eating these sweets is not a place where humans congregate.

Alicia stated she appreciated the discussion; it was very helpful. Kara asked Peggy and Cheryl how the Selectboard feels about this permitting issue. Peggy said they haven't discussed it.

Old Business

Walpole Gateway Update: Alicia said she walked the ephemeral stream path and saw the largest silver maple she has ever seen. She plans to go on the NH DES website to see which is the largest in the state, then possibly measure the one on this trail.

Kara questioned what the group wants to do about delineating the turnaround area and possibly unlocking the gate and creating the necessary signage. She feels the group should get going on this. John stated they decided at an earlier meeting to observe how many cars they see parked by the kiosk at any one time. No one has observed more than two.

Peter thinks a split rail fence would be the best barrier with a sign. There is space for two cars in a temporary turnaround. Signs will direct the public to park back up at the kiosk (loading and

unloading only). The gate will be unlocked. It can be pulled back then latched without a lock. Alicia said there should be a cartop sign like they have at Lake Warren. Lew asked when the work should take place. France will start making draft signage and email her signs to the members for feedback. She said she would then print them out and put them in protective transparent cases. The Commission will purchase the cases.

Peter said they will need three uprights and four rails for the turnaround, to be purchased at Hamshaw's. Then an excavator and small trucks will be needed to clear and sure pack the area. It was decided that this should be paid, rather than volunteer work. At one time Mark Houghton offered to do the work. John will reach out to him to see if it is something he would still be able to do. Peggy suggested contacting Tom Murray to help with the project.

Lew volunteered to draw up a plan and specs for materials. He will put out stakes and flags and should be able to do it in the next few weeks. Alicia asked him to send out an email when he is ready to do that so people can help.

Commission Website: Kelly has sent Alicia a draft website. Kelly asked her to review it and send content to be added. Alicia said she would forward the draft to the membership for comments in the next few weeks.

Easement Monitoring: Alicia set an email to anyone who is not on the Trails Committee about property monitoring. She said there will be a meeting later in August or early September to develop an action plan so they can do a few properties this year.

Other Business

Walpole Trails Subcommittee: Will Grossman gave the report for the subcommittee. At the meeting, Wendy reported to the five people present that the RTP Grant was submitted. Mike Hubbard will do the brush hogging, possibly this Wednesday, if his tractor is fixed. The State inspected the Rail Trail and gave the OK for all but the area north of the vet clinic. He said they will use hand tools to clear that area.

Ten trees were down on the Fanny Mason Trail. Kara and Pete took care of those (and the 13 ticks).

Rail Trail: Kara, Pete, France, and the Grossmans did another walk through of the Rail Trail. Four huge trees were in the way of the brush hogging, so Lew chain sawed them today.

Wendy reported that someone mowed the section of the trail that the State did not want mowed. As a result there are new ruts. Wendy photographed them and sent the pictures to the state, saying the Rail Trail Committee did not know who did the mowing.

The Grossmans and Peggy met with Dale Hubbard regarding the Rail Trail going through his property. Wendy said they agreed that the trail will take the bypass he created, and they will create signs to direct people using the trail to the bypass.

Reservoir Road: There is no new report. Alicia asked if there is a state-mandated time frame that they are working against. The answer was no.

Other: Lew asked if the Commission previously approved the purchase of a brush cutter. It would be helpful to have, so he said he would price them then bring it up for a new vote.

Lew asked about insurance for people using chainsaws on town property. Cheryl said that the town would not cover them because they have not been officially hired by the Town to do the work. Peggy said if several people were going out on one day, the town might be able to buy one day of insurance. Cheryl said volunteers usually sign waivers stating they are doing the work at their own risk. Wendy said Steven had some volunteers sign a waiver, but she doesn't know if he still has them. Cheryl asked that they follow up with Steven to find out where the waivers are.

John had three final bullet points:

1. PDIP interest rates have bottomed out.
2. The Commission's draft budget for 2023 is due September 6.
3. The next meeting will be September 12.

Alicia pointed out that there is \$50,000 for consulting work on the Reservoir Dam that hasn't been used. She asked if it could be carried over. Cheryl said it can; discuss this with Rich.

Wendy recommended adding a line in the budget for brush hogging. They will need to pay \$100 for the permit, \$1,000 for the bond, and roughly \$400 annually for the brush hogging itself. Alicia said that is a good idea.

With no further business, John moved to adjourn the meeting. Peter seconded, and all voted in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 8:14 p.m.

The next meeting will be on Monday, September 12, 2022.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jean Kobeski, Recording Secretary

** These minutes are in draft form until approved at the September 12, 2022 meeting.