

**Minutes for the Regular Meeting of the
Walpole Conservation Commission
November 7, 2022**

Members Present: Alicia Flammia (Chair), John Peska, Peter Palmiotto, Lew Shelley,
Laura Hayes, Steven Dumont,

Members Absent: France Menk

Alternates Present: Wendy Grossman

Visitors Present: Cheryl Mayberry (Selectboard liaison), Jean Kobeski (Recording Secretary)

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

Review and Approval of Minutes: Peter moved to accept the October 3, 2022, minutes as written. Laura seconded, and all voted to approve.

Public Business

Report from the Chair: Alicia reported that she talked to Christian Gowdy about the Ballam Farm. He said he is working with NRCS to keep the hedgerows open along the edges of the fields. Because he is certified organic he cannot use pesticides, so he is mowing to keep the invasives down. Laura asked who owns the property. Alicia answered that Gowdys own it and the town has a conservation easement on it.

Alicia announced she will not seek the position of Chair of the Commission for next year. She wants to remain a member but not serve as Chair. She asked commissioners to think about who would like to take over the role.

Treasury:	Conservation Savings Acct.	\$191,583.69
	Forestry	\$23,449.01
	Gateway	\$1,983.56
	Mason Non-Expendable	\$18,003.20
	Mason Expendable	\$383,487.87

New Business

2023 Budget: This year, taking out the \$50,000 for consulting work that was not expended but expected to possibly be used in 2023, there was \$8,473 budgeted but just \$6,624 used.

The Easement Monitoring Committee has discussed the possibility of hiring an intern to help with the monitoring. Alicia asked Cheryl how the inclusion of a paid intern should appear on the 2023 budget. Cheryl said they could level fund, create a line item for the intern, and move money from another line item they do not expect to expend. Peter stated a stipend of \$2500 would be a reasonable amount for 225 hours of work over an academic year. Wendy also reminded commissioners they will receive the \$1000 bond refund, which can be put back into the general fund. Peter moved to create a line item in the 2023 budget for an intern to help develop a systematic easement tracking and monitoring program. John seconded the motion, and all voted in favor. The motion carried.

Steven asked if the \$1500 line item for Rail Trail maintenance would be added. Alicia said she already added that to the budget, asking for extra money, not level funding.

Old Business

Hooper Forest: Alicia has not received an update from Alex. Wendy asked if hiking and biking trails would be marked before cutting begins. Alicia said trees to be cut are marked, as are clearly visible trails. Alex plans to have a public walkabout to explain the work to be done, and at that time, anyone who uses the trails can suggest alternate plans. Peter said he walked the cut with Alex two weeks ago with his forest management class and said they did pretty good job. They went to High Point where Alex suggested thinning and creating an overlook.

Lew was in touch with Rick Brackett of the Conservancy, which is planning to do some logging on the Skofield property. They are interested to know what the Commission's plans for logging the Hooper Forest are for timing and how the road landings might be shared.

Lew also mentioned that Rick found trails being leaf blown on that property and the Conservancy doesn't want trails leaf blown on their properties. He hopes to be in contact about the trails on that land, as well, and to know more about who has made them and maintains them.

Commission Website: Alicia said Kelli is waiting for pictures and content. A few commissioners said they have had some difficulty adding comments. Steven suggested a new deadline of the December meeting for comments, pictures, and other information. Steven said he would start writing a piece about the Trail Subcommittee. Alicia said other information can be found on Google Drive; Kelli has access to that. Alicia will invite Kelli to the January meeting, after Kelli has had a chance to see comments.

Other Business

Trail Subcommittee Report: Steven, Kara, and Becky cleared the Fanny Mason Trail. France took pictures. It still needs some clearing near the old shed and parking area on the other side.

Lew cut the big tree at the Mill Pond.

Wendy said she and Will walked the Rail Trail, and it looks good. She said the Snowmobile Club has chainsawed two trees and Lew reports they brush hogged the trails last weekend.

Steven said a maintenance plan for next year will be discussed and scheduled at the next subcommittee meeting.

Easement Monitoring: Alicia said the committee (Alicia, John, Laura, and Peter) met before the regular Commission meeting. It was decided that 14 properties will be monitored each year using a template that has been created. Four of the properties need to be monitored with other organizations' forms; they will start with those. They discussed hiring an intern to help grab all the information about the property. They will check with Sarah Downing annually to see if there has been any change to the properties (ownership). If not, they will use existing paperwork as a starting point. The committee will come up with a scope of work for the intern and advertise it.

Reservoir Dam: Cheryl stated that it is her understanding they are looking into repairing the dam. The cost difference between repairing the dam and taking it down is not significant and they have secured 100% of the cost.

Other

Laura announced that the Hooper Institute Board needs 3-4 new members.

Cheryl has been asked for information about hiking, biking, and especially climbing trails behind the old Jiffy Mart. There was a discussion about the many “unofficial” trails that exist and who owns the property. The only trail the Commission has mapped is the Table Rock Trail. Lew told Cheryl if she knows someone who wants to know more about climbing in that area, she can refer that person to Lew, who will direct them to the climbers he knows who climb there.

Lew announced that the new Fish and Game officer has moved into town.

The next meeting will be on Monday, December 5, 2022.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jean Kobeski, Recording Secretary

** These minutes are in draft form until approved at the December 5, 2022 meeting.