

**Minutes for the Regular Meeting of the
Walpole Conservation Commission
April 3, 2023**

Members Present: Alicia Flammia, John Peska, France Menk, Peter Palmiotto, Lewis Shelley, Steven Dumont, Lauren Halaquist (Intern)

Members Absent: None

Seating of Alternates: Kara Dexter, Wendy Grossman

Visitors Present: Peggy Pschirrer, Cheryl Mayberry (Selectboard liaisons), Alison Chickering, Joe and Sonja Sawyer, Sally Chickering, Marcus Lovell-Smith, Jean Kobeski (Recording Secretary)

Call to Order: Alicia called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. in Walpole Town Hall. This

meeting was recorded.

New Business

Biosolids in Walpole: Alison Chickering came to the meeting to make the Commission aware of a situation involving biosolids on her family farm in Walpole. She wanted to discuss the hazards of biosolids and enlist the help of the Conservation Commission in halting further delivery and spreading of this material at Chickering Farm and preventing it from being used on farms elsewhere in Walpole. Also in attendance were Sally Chickering, Joe and Sonja Sawyer, and Marcus Lovell-Smith to address this issue.

From March 20 - 22 of this year, RMI out of Holderness, NH, delivered 15 - 18 loads of biosolids, with 30 tons/load, to the Chickering Farm on River Road South, to be used as fertilizer. Ms. Chickering, an heir to her mother and late father's estate, tried to stop the delivery, stating the truckers were passing on posted roads. She was told they had secured permission from the road agent.

Ms. Chickering explained the dangers of the biosolids. Though the PFAS level in it is presently within legal range, this material is composed of treated medical waste, metals, viruses and bacteria, and waste water. Sonja Sawyer, whose property abuts the Chickering farm, said it has an obnoxious odor, like dead fish. Joe Sawyer stated that, in his whole life, he has not smelled anything as disgusting. He also stated that biosolids are forever chemicals. Alison Chickering said that, though the biosolids were tested before delivery, no testing has been done to see what it does once it hits the soil. She said the farm now has 18" of rich topsoil. NH DES is planning to rule on the legality of biosolids in New Hampshire in November; that will affect farms going forward but will not help the Chickerings, who have it on their land now.

Ms. Chickering is also concerned about the effect on birds, particularly the bald eagles who nest in that area. Her family provides riding lessons for many children, and she has read warnings that these materials should not touch the skin. She said many people enjoy walking, running, and biking on River Road South and may be deterred from

doing that due to the smell and possible danger of inhaling contaminants. She and Commissioners expressed concern about contaminants leaching into brooks and the Connecticut River. Sally Chickering said the biosolids leach to a 6 mile radius and the farm is located less than 1/4 mile from the river. Peter pointed out that Chickering land sits over an aquifer, making it a problem for the town. It was stated that, if the town needs extra water, they look to the aquifer, which would be polluted from the biosolids.

Mr. Lovell-Smith stated that, even though he is not an abutter to the Chickering Farm, he attended the meeting to learn more about biosolids for his own farm, Boggy Meadow, and to support the Chickerings in their effort to halt the use of biosolids in Walpole.

Alison Chickering asked if there is anything the Conservation Commission can do to stop this process. Alicia answered they can advocate for better practices but there really isn't much they can do. They are stewards of town-owned, rather than private properties. It was suggested Ms. Chickering write an article for the *Clarion* and other local newspapers to make people aware of the problem. Write letters to the editors. Jean suggested calling the *Keene Sentinel*, explaining the problem and inviting them to the farm for an interview. Sally Chickering suggested getting townspeople to sign a petition to give to the Chickerings. Steven said the only thing that can stop the use of biosolids is for the town to pass an ordinance banning them. Peggy explained the process of getting an ordinance passed and stated the earliest this could be done would be Town Meeting, 2024.

At this point the visitors thanked the Commissioners for their time and exited the meeting.

Approval of Minutes: Peter made a motion to accept the March minutes as written. Steven seconded, and all voted in favor. Motion carried.

Appointment of New Walpole Conservation Commission Chair: After consulting with Barbara Richter of the NHACC, Alicia suggested dividing the chair's responsibilities among the commissioners. Following a discussion of these responsibilities, the following duties were divided in this way:

- Check mail and chair meetings: Alicia
- Create meeting agendas: Kara
- Communicate as needed with other town boards: Wendy
- Check Commission email and serve as public contact: Steven

Cheryle reminded the commissioners they will need to determine who will take Laura's place as liaison to the Hooper Board.

Public Business

Treasury: Conservation: \$202,057.17
Forestry: \$23,876.50
Walker Road/Gateway: \$2,019.73

Mason Expendable: \$461,075.16
Mason Non-Expendable: \$19,501.61

Correspondences: The Commission received the following:
Municipal Conservation Commission Handbook
NH Planning and Land Use Handbook
Highlights from the Monadnock Conservancy

Commission Vacancies: Laura has not renewed her membership in the Commission, leaving one full-time position available. Wendy, currently an alternate, expressed interest in the position. She will write a letter to the Selectboard. This then creates two unfilled positions as alternates.

Old Business

Cheshire Rail Trail: Wendy stated she would like to do the first mowing in June, so she will start the application for the Special Use Permit. She asked the Commission for the \$100 fee and \$1,000 (refundable) bond, though she will try to have the bond waived. Kara moved to approve the \$100 application fee and \$1,000 bond (if necessary). John seconded the motion and all voted in favor. Motion carried. The \$100 will come from Trail Expenses. Wendy will talk to Rich about taking the \$1,000 from the Conservation or Forestry Fund. Alicia said these and brush-hogging expenses (\$1500) were supposed to be a Trail Maintenance line item in the budget but do not appear as such. Alicia will talk to Rich about this.

Recreational Trail Program Grant: Wendy reported that they will get the \$20,000 grant from the state, and they expect to receive the contract to sign in early May. Alicia will write the letter to the Trustees of the Trust Fund to get the previously approved money from the Fanny Mason Funds to meet the 20% matching requirement by the state for this project.

NH State Parks LWCF Grant Program Update: tabled until next month's meeting

Planning Board Workshop to Update Section on Natural Resources the Master Plan: Wendy and Peter will attend the workshop on April 25 at 7:00 p.m.

Prioritizing Future Projects: tabled until next month's meeting; Kara is presently compiling the list from the town report, meeting minutes, and Alex Barrett's assessment of town forests.

Other Business

Property Monitoring: Lauren reported that she is 85% finished with the summaries and glossary, which are in the easement monitoring folder in Google Drive. She has been working on the Aldrich property; boundaries are in question. Wendy said she would help Lauren and would give Lauren an opportunity to monitor the property with Will and her as the landowners. Lauren said she would email Wendy next week to set a time to do this.

Lauren also wants to start the Cabot/Boggy Meadow property. Alicia reminded her to take pictures.

Lauren's goal is to have all 15 property summaries finished by the end of summer. She is also working with Peter on writing monitoring protocols for a master document.

Walpole Trails Subcommittee: Lew, Steven, and Caryn Marshall cleaned and organized the tool storage shed. Lew emailed pictures of the shed to the Commissioners.

Upcoming events include:

1. France Menk's Fanny Mason Trail Walk - Sunday, April 16 (jam@france-menk.com)
2. Walpole Clean Up Day - Saturday, April 22, 8:00 a.m. Walpole Recycling Center
3. HOT (Help Our Trails) Day - Saturday, April 29, 9-12

Other: Lew presented an invoice for \$27.73 for keys. John moved; Steven seconded, and all voted to approve payment.

With no further business to discuss, Steven moved to adjourn the meeting. France seconded, and all voted in favor. Alicia adjourned the meeting at 9:00 p.m.

The next meeting will be Monday, May 1, 2023.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jean Kobeski, Recording Secretary

** These minutes are in draft form until approved at the May 1, 2023 meeting.