

**Minutes for the Regular Meeting of the  
Walpole Conservation Commission  
July 10, 2023**

**Members Present:** John Peska, Peter Palmiotto, Lew Shelley, Wendy Grossman

**Members Absent:** Alicia Flammia, Steven Dumont, France Menk

**Seating of Alternates:** Kara Dexter

**Visitors Present:** Peggy Pschirrer, Nichole Adams, Jean Kobeski (Recording Secretary)

**Call to Order:** John Peska called the meeting to order at 7:15 p.m. in Walpole Town Hall.

**Review and Approval of Minutes:** Kara noted that on page 2 of the 6/5/23 minutes, under Cheshire Rail Trail, the name Mark should read *Mike*. Wendy asked that her report on the Great Brook culvert repair included under the RTP Grant heading on page 2 be recorded under its own heading since it is unrelated to the RTP Grant. Lew moved to approve the 6/5/23 minutes as amended. Peter seconded and all voted in favor. Motion passed.

**Public Business:** There were no Treasurer's Report or correspondences tonight.

**New Business**

**Adopting Meeting Norms:** Peter led the group in brainstorming a simple set of norms which, when regularly followed, will lead to efficient, productive and respectful Commission meetings. He added that norms help create a secure, safe space where members feel comfortable participating in a discussion and asking questions. He stated that new groups often take this step when they first form.

First, Peter set up the tables and chairs in a square to improve communication and asked to do this at all future meetings. He then shared a list of norms he brainstormed and the commissioners discussed each and tweaked them as they found necessary. Peter stressed that, to be successful in their intent, norms should be proposed by the group, agreed to by the group, and revisited yearly. Peter said the draft document listing the proposed norms discussed tonight is in the Google Drive in the Meeting Agenda section.

Peter made a motion that the Walpole Conservation Commission commit to developing a set of meeting norms during the next two meetings. Kara seconded and all voted in favor. Motion carried.

John asked Jean to include group or individual reminders of things to prepare for the next meeting when she sends out the minutes. These are action items that summarize who said they would do what for the next meeting.

**Replacement of Trees on the Common:** Peggy Pschirrer reported that people living on the common are distressed that the five trees taken down on the common (three by the town and two by Liberty Utilities) have not been replaced. Peggy stated there is no money in the budget to replace them. At a recent select board meeting Ray Boas suggested that the board approach the Walpole Conservation Commission about forming a subcommittee to look after trees in town or help find creative ways to raise money to replace the downed trees.

She asked the commissioners if they would be interested in forming such a subcommittee or helping raise money to purchase replacement trees.

Lew suggested possibly offering some seed money from the Forest Fund. Peter said they should start with a small urban tree planting plan, which would include a time-consuming inventory of trees. He also said that planned road work on Washington Street should be completed before any planting takes place. That would put this project a year out during which landscape architects can be consulted and an inventory completed.

Wendy asked who is responsible for maintaining the common. Peggy said our highway department cuts the grass. We do not have a public works department, which would have the personnel to devote to landscape maintenance.

A discussion followed about what types of trees could successfully be planted on the common, fundraising, and who should be responsible for the project. The Commission hopes that Mr. Boas will attend the next meeting to present his ideas and commissioners who were absent for this meeting can participate in the discussion and decision-making.

For the August meeting Lew and John offered to talk to Fran Macri about tree selection and Peggy said she would send the commission the name of the arborist with whom the select board has worked.

**Pickleball Court on Walker Road:** Mr. Hayes attended a June select board meeting to ask if the land on Walker Road would be suitable for Pickleball. Commissioners agreed that this would not meet the intended use of the Gateway property.

### **Old Business**

**Commission Liaison to the Hooper:** A decision will be made at the August meeting.

**Walpole Gateway Update:** John reported that he walked the property with Mark Houghton and the excavator operator and said they will try to get the work done this week, weather permitting. He said Mark requested that the Commission brush hog from the upper parking lot down to the river to create a 16' wide space for rescue vehicles. There was an question about whether rescue vehicles could easily access the river if the fence is constructed. Lew suggested finishing the turnaround area before making plans for the fence. John said he would talk to Mark about his spacing needs and decisions about the fencing will be made at the August meeting. Lew also asked if fabric would be put under the SurePack. John will ask Mark about that, as well.

### **Other Business**

**Walpole Trails Subcommittee:** Wendy reported:

- More trail maps have been printed.
- Lew led a trail walk at High Blue.
- Will and Wendy will lead a trail walk on Rail Trail after RTP work done.
- Sharon had small, but good turnouts for her birding walks.
- They talked about repairing the bridge at Fanny Mason.
- They will assess trail maintenance at Mill Pond.
- Brush hogging of Rail Trail complete. Will proceed on RTP grant.
- Lew, Rob Westover, Jeff Harrington, Will and Wendy Grossman met at Hooper Forest to discuss mountain bike trails and possible new hiking/biking trails.

John asked if there will be a need for another brush hogging. Wendy said it would probably be needed in August. Kara made a motion to approve \$450 to brush hog the Rail Trail and \$200 for the upper field. Lew seconded and all voted to approve. Wendy said she could ask Mike

Hubbard if he could brush hog the Gateway for rescue vehicles once they have more information about what is needed.

**Property Monitoring:** Wendy reported that she did some research on GRANITview to get its recently updated information on conservation properties. She pulled all the data for Walpole and annotated all of its conservation properties. She distributed a spreadsheet of conservation lands for which the town of Walpole has a protecting role. She also distributed a terminology sheet, which she briefly described. Wendy noted on the spreadsheet that, for the majority of properties, the Town of Walpole is the owner and does not hold a conservation easement on them. Therefore, she feels the term “easement monitoring” should not be used for their project. Perhaps they could call it something like “conservation land monitoring project.”

Wendy concluded her presentation by asking what the commissioners want to do next. Which properties do they want to monitor and how do they keep the momentum from Lauren Halaquist’s work going? Peter said he would put Wendy’s data sheets on Google Drive. Then he will call a meeting of the monitoring subcommittee to discuss the data and plan next steps, which they will present at the next Commission meeting. Kara asked to be included in the meeting with Peter, Alicia, John, and Wendy.

Wendy asked that they establish check-out and return procedures for Commission files.

**General Information:** John reported that the USGS is doing subsurface water quality monitoring off Route 12.

With no further business to discuss, Lew moved to adjourn the meeting. Kara seconded and John adjourned the meeting at 9:25 p.m.

**The next meeting will be on Monday, August 7, 2023.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Jean Kobeski, Recording Secretary

\*\* These minutes are in draft form until approved at the August 7, 2023 meeting.