

**Minutes for the Regular Meeting of the
Walpole Conservation Commission (via Zoom)
December 7, 2020**

Members Present: Alicia Flammia, Lewis Shelley, , Steven Dumont, John Peska, Laura Hayes, Cheryl Mayberry (Selectboard Liason), Jean Kobeski (Secretary)

Members Absent: France Menk, Jackie Kensen

Alternate Present: Myra Mansouri

Visitors: Maureen Jenkins, Kara Dexter

Call to Order: Alicia called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

Review and Approval of Minutes: Lew pointed out in the minutes of 11/2 that the third heading under Old Business should read: *Dates for Blazing Town Forest Boundaries*. Steven corrected the first sentence by substituting the word *boundaries* for trails. With these corrections Lew moved to accept the minutes of 11/2, and John seconded. All approved.

Public Business

Treasury: As of December 6, Forestry Account - \$30,819.37
Conservation - \$142,748.08
Walker Road - \$3,363.78

Invoices:

Robie Speed - \$450 Lew moved; John seconded; all voted to pay

NH Association of Conservation Commissions - \$275 dues Lew moved, Steven seconded; all voted to pay.

Old Business

Public Forum: Alicia introduced Maureen Jenkins, the professional facilitator with whom she has been speaking about the organization of the public forum. Maureen introduced herself to the membership and explained her experience as a facilitator both here and abroad. She said she is available to lead the public forum and has successfully led meetings virtually.

Maureen's biggest question to the group was what they plan to achieve with this public forum.

Alicia stated that the purpose is to solicit public input on what to do with the Walker Road property. Over the past year the WCC has heard some ideas and concerns and it is time to decide what to do. Maureen wanted to know which people have expressed these ideas and concerns. John answered that many people contributed money toward the purchase of the land and now the WCC is overwhelmed with public opinion on how to use it and make it accessible.

Lew explained that people need to understand what is permissible under the deed. Steven suggested an educational meeting for the public. Maureen recommended waiting at least until February; holding an in-person public forum as originally planned would not be appropriate due to the covid surge. John agreed and suggested setting a new date at the next WCC meeting.

Laura stated that, with some thought, a Zoom forum could be productive. Myra expressed a concern that not all families are familiar with virtual meetings. Alicia shared Myra's concern. Laura responded that, if they rule out Zoom, they may be looking at summer dates. Lew said this needs to be

addressed before April. John stated the ground rules for use of the property could be presented at Town Meeting. Maureen warned against assuming that Town Meeting will be held. Cheryl stated that Town Meeting 2021 is scheduled to take place in March in the Walpole Elementary School Gymnasium to allow for social distancing. She did say a virtual meeting is open for discussion.

Alicia brought up the comment boxes the WCC discussed at the last meeting. She asked how viable they would be, considering the places where they would have been put are closed. Steven said the box could still be put on the library porch (library previously agreed to having one) because it is protected. He also stated that people could go to the WCC Facebook page or Walpolian to record comments. Maureen said they should also have a physical address where the comment box(es) would be located. Cheryl also noted that the Clarion has a website that people use.

Maureen asked if the group wants the forum to take place before Town Meeting. John and Alicia answered yes. Maureen then outlined what a virtual forum should look like. It should be done in stages:

1. Presentation by WCC giving context to the meeting. It would also be the time to explain regulations outlined by the deed.
2. Breakout group of about 3-4 people for 10 minutes to discuss ideas, concerns, and formulate questions
3. Reconvene to listen to small group input
4. Second breakout group to discuss what they just heard
5. WCC response to what was discussed: "This is what we hear you saying."
6. WCC states what they expect to get done in 2021

Lew said he thinks most people don't know the parameters of this property, and when they hear, comments should die down .

Alicia asked if the group felt ready to do this by mid-January. She said she would be in favor of postponing the event until February.

Steven said he doesn't think there is enough time during WCC meetings to plan such an event. He suggested forming a subcommittee to plan outside of meeting time. Alicia offered to be part of the subcommittee; Lew volunteered as well. Steven and Laura stated that another Zoom meeting would be an efficient way to plan.

Maureen stated she would put her format in an email and send it to the group.

Alicia said the event will be rescheduled for February and it looks like they are headed toward a virtual event. Myra stated that maybe by February there could be an in-person meeting, perhaps at WES.

Steven stated they should send an immediate message to the Walpolian and Facebook announcing the cancellation of the January forum. An email could be sent to the Clarion. John said that the date of the February public forum will be announced after the January WCC meeting. Alicia said she would email the subcommittee.

Maureen asked if the group thought Fish and Game should be involved in the forum. Lew doesn't think it is necessary. Cheryl agrees as long as ramifications are explained. Myra asked if something about that could be put in writing to be read at the forum or maybe there could be handouts. Cheryl has a handout that includes the RSAs. Lew said he could work on a handout as well.

Lew thanked Maureen for her input and participation in the meeting. Other members added their thanks.

New Business

Logging Around the Fire Pond; Alicia spoke to Alex of Long View about this logging and was told there is nothing the WCC can do. Steven said it is not designated a prime wetland, so there are no regulations against logging outside the easement area. Laura stated the property owner, not Long View, is doing the logging. Long View has logged only on the Hooper easement.

John asked if the WCC gets Intent to Log documents. Alicia answered not always. Lew asked if they could get these documents in the future and Cheryl said that should be possible.

Old Business

Trail Maps: Alicia said the SW Regional Planning Commission “has gone dark.” She is not getting responses from them and doesn’t know if she will have the expenses before the end of the year. Steven said he would give them a call. Lew said he has more data to give Alicia.

Blazing Properties: Steven, Alicia, and Kara walked the Great Brook Town Forest and couldn’t find any blazes. They saw some pins and ribbons and the Monadnock Conservancy corner pins. They painted the corners where they found those pins.

Steven said there are 9 more to do in the spring or fall. He said 3 people is a good number to do this work. He also suggested before going out again, they contact the Monadnock Conservancy for GPS data and have copies of the rapid assessments for taking notes. He also suggested having a gear bag containing waters, toilet paper, first aid supplies, more brushes. Lew recommended purchasing these supplies before the end of the year. He told Steven he would help determine what to buy for the gear bag. He moved that they purchase blazing supplies up to \$100. John seconded, and all approved. Steven said he submitted an invoice for \$56.23 to the selectboard office for the paint and brushes.

Reservoir Dam: John, a representative from F&O, Mark Houghton, and John Fenton Henry met with the selectboard to determine how to proceed depending on the designation of the reservoir. Right now it is at the significant hazard level. It was determined that modeling should be done to make the final designation. If it remains significant, hardening of North Road at the bend, and repairs on School Street will need to be done at the cost of about \$20,000. If modeling shows the reservoir to be high hazard, the culvert will need to be repaired, and necessary work will cost \$420,000. It was suggested that, if this is the case, the dam should be removed and the brook restored to its original state. Cheryl said community input will be necessary before any decisions are made. Alicia asked about the timeline for modeling, and John said it is TBD.

John also stated that there are federal funds available for dam removal. Laura said there are numerous organization that can help fund such a project, and Alicia said there are also climate resiliency funds.

Other Business:

Trail Maintenance: Steven held a virtual meeting with 16 volunteers interested in being on the trail maintenance crew. They included members of the Hooper Hill Hoppers, walkers, WCC, and mountain bikers. They will meet once each month before the WCC meeting and determine a maintenance schedule. They will serve as “eyes on the trail” to report when they spot something on a trail that needs to be addressed. They will maintain current trails and note possible future trail locations. Steven will send Zoom invitations to monthly meetings to WCC members.

Adjournment: John moved,, Lew seconded, and all voted in favor of adjourning the meeting at 8:18 p.m.

The next Zoom meeting is Monday, January 4, 2021, at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jean Kobeski, Recording Secretary

*** These minutes are in draft form until approved by the Commission on February 3, 2020.

