

**Minutes for the Regular Meeting of the
Walpole Conservation Commission
December 6, 2021**

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

Members Absent: Laura Hayes

Alternates Present: Kara Dexter

Visitors Present: Cheryl Mayberry (Selectboard Co-Liason), Jean Kobeski, Recording Secretary, Chuck Shaw (via Zoom)

Call to Order: Alicia called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. in Town Hall basement and via Zoom. This meeting was being recorded.

Review and Approval of Minutes: Alicia asked that the following two sentences on page 3 under Nelson Forest be stricken: *Lew asked if this is a matter for police. Alicia answered that, unless it is something that is hazardous and should not be out in the open, police do not handle this type of situation.* Alicia also noted that, on page 3 under the Vote on the Gateway Gate, the forester's name should be corrected to read *Matt Kelly*. Lew moved to accept the minutes of November 4, 2021. Steven seconded, and all voted in favor.

Public Business

Treasury: Conservation Account: \$154,294.96
Forestry Account: \$30,656.98
Walker Road: \$3,078.09
Mason Non-expendable: \$20,510.84
Mason Expendable: \$482,088.19

Correspondence: Two invoices came in that were previously approved for payment:
Long View (for Walker Road and Fanny Mason) - \$800
Public Facilitator: \$210.

Alicia received two correspondences regarding potential wetland violations in North Walpole near the power line corridor. One of the potential violations was closed, no violation observed. There is a documented violation, which is a skidder trail leading up to a stream crossing through part of an electrical utility easement on the Scott property. Banks of the stream are unstable and eroding. They were told to immediately install erosion controls and send documentation regarding the work by mid-November. John said he felt that Liberty Utilities would be responsible for that work.

There was a request for money from the Monadnock Conservancy along with their publication.

New Business

MRRTC Candidate: The Monadnock Region Rail Trail Collaborative (MRRTC) requested a representative from Walpole to serve on their board. Wendy and Will Grossman have been working closely with the collaborative and Mike Kowalczyk, collaborative chair, informed them of the board opening. Alicia spoke to members of the selectboard and Wendy about appointing her to the board. All were in agreement. John moved to vote to have Wendy Grossman appointed to the MRRTC board. Steven seconded the motion, and everyone voted in favor.

Town Website: Alicia spoke to Dennis Marcom about how to get the WCC website up and running in a streamlined fashion. He stated that the Commission would work with the town volunteer, Ryan. He would help them set up a 1-page document to be added to the town website. He would need someone to create a document with the desired layout, heading, etc., which he would then make live on the town website, and a few WCC members could serve as administrators. France offered to make a draft.

Old Business

Nelson Town Forest: Alicia asked Cheryl if she had an update on the trash dumping on town property. Alicia had heard that Peggy brought it up at a staff meeting. Cheryl said Peggy would be the person to answer that question. Laura was in touch with the Conservancy because this is their issue to address, but she did not sense that they were going to do anything about it. It would be possible for the town to write a letter to the property owner, but it was decided to table the discussion until Peggy and Laura were present at the next WCC meeting and could give their updates and answer questions.

Walpole Gateway Walk-About: Alicia stated she received notes on the discussion that took place after the walk from Maureen, the public facilitator. France emailed the membership Matt Kelly, County Forester's thoughts from the event. Alicia said the full reports can be found on Google Drive. Peter stated the event was awesome and well-attended. Kara took pictures. Alicia said she was pleased that people who expressed concerns about the property in the past, as well as people who were interested in learning about the property attended.

To summarize Maureen's report, she said areas of focus should include:

- vehicle/boat access
- pedestrian access
- parking
- recreational options

She and Matt Kelly stated that the first order of business needs to be invasive control. Matt suggested reaching out to neighbors about the invasive control to make it a communal effort.

Alicia said she would write an article about the event for the *Clarion* and asked Kara to send her pictures she could include in her write-up.

Vote on the Gateway Gate: France said she thought they should open the gate and put a latch on it with signs asking people to close and latch the gate when leaving and not to park in front of the gate. Peter agreed with France, but said they need to establish a clear boundary of where people and vehicles can go. After hearing the information about sensitive soils during the walk-about, a boundary is necessary. He said if people go down there and create ruts and erosion, the burden of repair would likely fall to the Commission. He said he supports France's proposal but not until access is allowed safely and erosion does not occur.

France still feels that something should be done in the meantime. She suggested putting sawhorses to show where vehicle access ends. Kara stated opening the gate does not necessarily mean that cars are allowed. Unlocking the gate with no cars might be a solution. France agreed. Steven asked how many people will need to drive down there in the next five months. Why decide now? Cheryl suggested picking a date in the spring to open the gate; Lew suggested it be seasonal.

Alicia pointed out they have never established what the road could be used for other than agricultural uses. They have never voted on public use, where cars are allowed, parking. A lot needs to be discussed and voted on before she feels comfortable letting people go through the gate. Alicia feels

that the following needs to be done before opening the gate:

- improve the road
- decide on parking
- determine what types of boats can be taken down

Steven asked Chuck Shaw if he feels that, if they do these things, this will satisfy the needs of the community. Chuck responded by saying that these efforts by the Commission show they see the long term viability of the land. He is delighted to see the Commission moving forward with these plans.

Alicia stated she feels the motion needs to be expanded or crafted differently. After several suggestions, Peter moved to amend the original motion to read: to seasonally (May 1-November 30) unlock (not remove) the gate and allow vehicle access with car top boats only, for drop off and pick up, dependent upon the delineation of a turn around area and appropriate signage.

He said that this would give them time to go down, measure areas, put out horses, and decide how much Sure Pak would be needed. Lew also suggested that a sign stating *Vehicles will be towed at owner's expense* should be included in the signage.

John asked if Matt Kelly found a better location for a put in. It was stated that the north side of Chuck's building would provide a good location.

Cheryl suggested the motion state there will be a reassessment in 6 months so they are not locked in to any decision. She also suggested creating a set of guidelines for use. Alicia said they could set a date for opening the gate, and in the meantime, they can develop their guidelines for use of the property.

Lew said a seasonal opening of the gate is entirely appropriate because, no matter what they do, there will be a mud season.

France seconded the motion on the table. All voted in favor. The motion passed.

Steven stated that they need to keep mowing the fields to keep the invasives back. Someone should be signed up to mow. Alicia said she had spoken to Christian Gowdy recently, and they should keep him in mind.

France asked Peter if he would be willing to work with her on the guidelines. He agreed. She also volunteered to work on the signage.

Hooper Forest: The Hooper Trustees want to do the logging to generate revenue. Alicia said she signed the proposal today for Long View to do a forest management plan. The Commission will pay for the plan and the Hooper Institute will get the revenue, minus the cost of logging.

Alicia invited Alex Barrett to the January Commission meeting to give a report on all the town properties and hear his recommendations for the next two seasons.

Other Business

Walpole Trail Subcommittee: Steven reported that Wendy Grossman told him the amount of grant money from the Trails Bureau is \$55,000. Lew asked when there would be an RFP - Request for Proposals - for the work on the Rail Trail. Kara read from a document which stated it would be between March and June, for work to be complete at the end of December. Along with the money, the Trails

Bureau sends a list of proposed contractors.

Steven and Lew said Table Rock has been mapped. Alicia asked if there is any news on the printing of the maps. There was no update.

Property Monitoring: Alicia said she received a reminder from the Forest Society to send in the property monitoring report on their two properties. LChip also asked for their reports. A sign-up sheet needs to be done so Commission members can sign up to monitor properties. Steven said he would do that.

Reservoir Road: John said he, Alicia, Mark Houghton, and the Selectboard met to discuss future plans for the dam. They said the cost to repair the dam would be \$1 million or more, and the cost to take it out would be approximately the same. If it is repaired, it would require cutting down all the trees and vegetation in the area so a dam modeling Surry Dam could be created. Alicia said all of the recreational value of the area would have to be removed. Removal of the dam would not be easy because it was built in 1905, and it has a solid stone block core. They would need to restore water flow back to what it was. They would have to reduce the slope, replace the culvert, and remove all the trees at the base. They thought they would contact Fuss and O'Neill to help them develop a hybrid model, in which the water level would be lowered and water flow would be reduced. Alicia explained there would be a constructed wetlands system which would hold back water in a heavy rain event, but also create a tumbling waterway. Mark will contact Fuss and O'Neill. They have until March or April to respond to DES with their plans.

John said that, no matter what they do, it will be very costly and townspeople will need to be briefed on it at Town Meeting or another special meeting. Peter asked if taxpayers will have to bear this expense. Cheryl stated they want to look for grant money and other funding. Alicia said they can collaborate with the Connecticut River Conservancy, which has been involved in this type of work before. They may be helpful in the search for funding. Alicia also said she would get information on Brick funding from her colleague.

Lew reported he spoke to Dale Hubbard about the ownership of the Rail Trail property. Dale suggested researching this property at the County Registrar's office.

Peter stated he received an email from a neighbor regarding the streetlights. He referred her to the Selectboard. There are supply chain issues and lights will be replaced when they become available.

Peter asked about assessment of the trees on the common. Cheryl said the Selectboard is looking for an arborist, who will assess trees still on the common. It is their desire to keep healthy trees, remove those that are dying, and replace them with new ones. In other words, they want to preserve what they can and replace trees that need to be replaced. Liberty Utilities has agreed to collaborate in this effort. Peter said he would reach out to Joe Britton, head landscaper at Keene State College.

With no further business to discuss, John moved to adjourn. Peter seconded, and Alicia ended the meeting at 8:40.

The next meeting will be Monday, January 3, 2021, at 7:00 p.m. in Town Hall. Notify Alicia if you would like a Zoom link to this meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Jean Kobeski, Recording Secretary

*** These minutes are in draft form until approved at the January 3 meeting.

