

**Minutes for the Regular Meeting of the
Walpole Conservation Commission
May 2, 2022**

Members Present: Alicia Flammia (Chair), France Menk, Peter Palmiotto, Lewis Shelley,
Laura Hayes, Steven Dumont

Members Absent: John Peska (Vice-Chair)

Alternates Present: Kara Dexter, Samantha Loch

Visitors Present: Michael Nerrie, Rob Westover, Wendy and Will Grossman, Peggy Pschirrer
and Cheryl Mayberry (Selectboard liaisons), Jean Kobeski (Recording Secretary)

Call to Order: Alicia called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. This meeting was recorded.

Review and Approval of Minutes: Kara noted a grammatical correction on page 1 of the April 4 minutes and Lew corrected the spelling of Peter's last name. It should read *Palmiotto*. With those amendments, Lew moved to accept the April 4 minutes. Steven seconded and all voted to approve the minutes.

Public Business

Report from the Chair: Alicia stated she reached out to the Monadnock Conservancy about the land use questionnaires. Alex Metzger told her that, instead of using the questionnaires, the WCC can report annually any properties that were bought, sold, developed, or logged via a concise email.

Tresury Report: Mason Expendable: \$473,529.35
 Mason Non-Expendable: \$20,234.41

Other balances will be forwarded when Alicia receives them from Mr. Adams.

Correspondences: Alicia received a general correspondence letter from the Monadnock Conservancy.

New Business

Aquatic Habitat Restoration Project: Michael Nerrie attended the meeting to report on two projects, one that is happening and one that he wants to make the town aware of for future culvert replacement. The first is a stream restoration project, on which he is working with the NRCS. Matt from NRCS told him there is funding through the Rural Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) for this type of project. The more stream area involved increases the chance of securing funding, so Michael contacted three abutters to his property to join in the effort. They agreed. He said Trout Unlimited came and surveyed two unfragmented miles of Great Brook and said this would be a good candidate for RCPP funding. They would come in and put logs in the stream, which would provide flood mitigation and create aquatic habitat. The process is called SWA, Strategic Wood Addition. Michael and Matt from NRCS will apply for the RCPP grant. The deadline is late May.

Michael said that, during the survey, Trout Unlimited discovered the culvert at the bottom of the stream crossing March Hill road is perched, meaning it is high and trout cannot get up into it. The culvert is in poor condition. Trout Unlimited would love to see the culvert replaced for trout use. Michael talked to Mike Rau, who said the town is aware of the culvert but replacement is not yet in the ten-year plan. Michael Nerrie said he would go to the Selectboard to get it on their

radar. There is also grant money for this type of work but would not be available until at least next year. Peggy agreed that Michael should present this information to the Selectboard.

Lew asked how the stream restoration work would be done. Michael answered Trout Unlimited would do it. He said it takes about one month/mile; this job is two miles long. He said that roughly every 100' they fell a tree into the stream and tie it into the bank so it doesn't wash downstream.

Michael asked if anyone knew of other restoration projects like this that have been done in town. Lew gave a brief description of a project in the section of Cold River below Drewsville Gorge.

Alicia thanked Michael for his report and offered to provide a letter of intent for the grant application process. Since it is a partnership project, Michael thought that might be a good idea. He will keep Alicia informed as he writes the grant.

Walpole Conservation Commission Membership Renewal: Alicia, France, and Peter are up for renewal this year. A letter of intent will be sent to Town Hall shortly.

Sponsor-A-Highway: Kara brought information about this DOT project and asked if the Conservation Commission would like to sponsor a section of (route 12) highway in town. Alicia asked if they could select where they wanted to work. Kara said a representative, David Konesko, could bring maps to a meeting and explain what sections are available. She said the state would provide guidelines, signs, safety vests, and bags and would pick up the trash-filled bags. Kara said they would need to adopt a 2-mile stretch of road and complete a status report when the work is complete.

Steven said maybe they could get businesses to get involved with them. Kara stated there are plenty of people in town who would help. Peter stated the commission has trail maintenance to they should focus on; perhaps it would be better to let the businesses adopt the highway.

Alicia asked for a motion to adopt a section of highway; hearing no motion, Steven said he would write an article about the program for the *Clarion* and *Walpolean* to encourage the public to get involved in Sponsor-A-Highway. Kara offered to edit his article and share her thoughts with him.

Request to Build New Trails in Town Forests: Rob Westover, a member of the mountain bike community, addressed the Commission about building new trails in the future in town forests and watershed. He said he realized there are logging projects scheduled for the next few years, so he is thinking of doing this work when the clearing is complete. Right now he is working on securing permission and funds for the project. The goal is to increase sustainable trails accessible to more people. He wants to build more beginner/intermediate level trails to build enthusiasm among young people and families for the sport. He would also like to have more trails to which people could ride, rather than drive.

Rob said at this point he is seeking permission and information about what his group can do. When Alicia asked him if he had a time frame in mind, Rob said it would be after logging of the Hooper Forest is complete. It would probably be a year or two from now.

Rob cited the bike trails in Rochester, VT. It is a tiny town that has developed an extensive trail system as enthusiasm for biking has grown.

Samantha asked if the trails would be wide enough for emergency vehicles to gain access. He said there would be access to hikers and possibly ATVs, for emergency purposes.

Alicia asked Rob where he is so far with organization and funding. His response was, "Ground Zero." He was here basically to gain the Commission's permission and support. Alicia said it aligns nicely with the Commission's work with the Rail Trail. Peggy said she thinks Rob's idea is great, as do France and Lew. Lew reminded Rob, though, that town forests are multi-purpose, so new trails need to be designed with that and habitat in mind. Wendy suggested that Rob work with the Trail Committee because they may be able to help. Alicia thanked Rob for his presentation and asked to be kept informed.

Old Business

Hooper Forest Management Plan Update: Alicia signed the contract for the invasive species work and management plan, so Alex is "off and running."

Walpole Gateway Action Plan Update: Peter, Lew, and France visited the property to take measurements and scope out the area for the drop off/turnaround. They identified a spot where 4-6 cars could unload kayaks and canoes and turn around to return to the upper parking area. Lew said it wouldn't take much gravel and it's just before it gets really wet. Peter said it is a good distance from the river and wetlands.

Peter said they know where the side lines are but the corridor line is uncertain. It was determined the kiosk is on the Rail Trail; Lew thinks that will be all right. If not, it can be moved.

Alicia proposed getting a wetland boundary survey. A discussion ensued about the advantages of such a survey and whether the full survey is worth the cost. Is it more than you need for what you want to do? Since there was some uncertainty about some of the boundaries and what they might want to do in the future, the group felt the survey should be done now.

Peter moved that they get an estimate for a survey and wetland delineation. Lew seconded the motion and all voted in favor. Lew will call a surveyor he knows. Alicia told Lew to be sure to get an estimate for a full property boundary survey and wetland delineation.

Town Website Update: France spoke with Kelli about her proposal to create the WCC website. Kelli actually prepared a presentation with a sample to show the commission tonight, but she was ill and could not attend.

Kelli told France that having a link to the town website would be no problem. She said she would be available, per contract, for two months after the website is up and running to make sure everything is running smoothly and Commission members understand how to post information and photos. Laura asked if the Commission should choose a person to be in charge of the website; France said all members will be shown how to post. Lew said he feels that it would be important to have one or two members serve as webmasters, otherwise it might get out of control. France clarified that everyone will be shown how to post; they will need to decide later how they actually want to manage the website.

Peter asked what the vision of the website is. Is it grander than what the town can do on its website? Isn't the town supposed to support each town department on their website? Alicia said that, right now, the town is doing nothing. Cheryl then explained that a town department has offered to redo the town's website. This proposal to the town has not been read or discussed by all selectboard members, nor has it been budgeted. But Cheryl said it would support

each department, which would be expected to maintain its own page. She said the Commission should go ahead with plans if they want a website now; the town's would be at least a year away from going online. Kelli said the commission website could easily have a link to the town's. Peggy said it is very important to be able to link to the town's website.

Steven moved to accept Kelli's proposal to design a website for the commission. Lew seconded and all voted in favor. France will contact Kelli and have her send a contract to Alicia.

Nelson Town Forest Update: Kara reported that she, her husband, and France picked up 437 pounds of trash from the property. She said the homeowner who lives across the street helped with the clean up.

Other Business

Walpole Trails Subcommittee: The committee will sponsor a trail maintenance training on June 18 led by Lew. This will be for trail committee and Commission members, and members of the public, who want to learn about trail maintenance and possibly become leaders. It will be from 9 a.m.-1 p.m., possibly at Mill Pond. The Commission will provide the tools.

Trail maps were printed by Gem Graphics for \$233. Steven will send the invoice to Rich. France picked the maps up and they are now in Town Hall. Lew said the shelf will be ready this week.

Steven asked Wendy if there was a Rail Trail update. She said a number of things are in progress, but there is nothing new with regard to the grant.

Reservoir Dam: John reported via email that they are still waiting for a meeting to be set up with Fuss and O'Neill.

Continuation of Hybrid Meetings: Alicia asked if the membership wants to continue hybrid or return to in-person only meetings. It was pointed out by Kara that hybrid meetings enable busy guests (like Alex or Rob W.) to have an opportunity to easily attend meetings. And due to Covid concerns or illness, members like to have the opportunity to attend meetings remotely. Cheryl reminded everyone that a majority of voting people need to be in person. France asked why voting can't be done virtually; Alicia explained that there is no RSA which permits virtual meetings. Kara said she is happy to run the Zoom meeting. Going forward, meetings will be hybrid.

Other

Conservation Maps: Peter has the small printed conservation maps but was unable to bring them to this evening's meeting.

Dam Removal: Samantha offered to invite Ron Rhodes to attend a meeting to talk about dam removal, if it comes up. He works out of Greenfield and his job is to write permits and take dams out. Alicia said they need to get the Reservoir Dam report first. Then the Commission would make a recommendation to the town to remove it or repair it. Townspeople would then vote which way they want to go. After the vote, the Commission could then proceed with the work. Samantha will send Alicia Rhodes' information.

Easement Monitoring: Steven reported that ten people, including two representatives from the Monadnock Conservancy, met at Merriam Town Forest for the easement monitoring training. They discussed what to look for and what information they should include in a written report. It

was explained that towns could create their own reporting template, as long as it contained necessary information. Laura is working on a template for the WCC.

Conservancy members explained that landowners can join the monitoring of their property.

Steven said a sign-up link, paperwork, maps can be put on Google drive and accessed in the field. There are apps which have accurate maps to help with the process. Laura is concerned that if volunteers are doing the monitoring they may not understand easement language. Steven said binders with explanation of the terms can be carried while monitoring.

Steven suggested jumping on some monitoring this year. Lew suggested selecting two smaller properties to continue the warm-up. The process should involve 2 people/easement. Alicia suggested having a small group choose 2 easements. Choose a date to do the monitoring then follow up with the paperwork. Lew suggested forming an easement subcommittee to organize this. Alicia asked that the creation of this subcommittee be put on the June agenda.

Adjournment: With no further business, Alicia ended the meeting at 8:47 p.m.

The next meeting will be virtual on Monday, June 6, 2022.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jean Kobeski, Recording Secretary

** These minutes are in draft form until approved at the June 6, 2022 meeting.