

**Minutes for the Regular Hybrid Meeting of the
Walpole Conservation Commission
December 5, 2022**

Members Present: Alicia Flammia, John Peska, France Menk, Peter Palmiotto, Lewis Shelley, Steven Dumont

Members Absent: Laura Hayes

Seating of Alternates: Wendy Grossman; Kara Dexter in attendance via Zoom

Call to Order: Alicia called the hybrid meeting to order at 7:07 p.m. in the basement of Town Hall. This meeting was recorded.

Review and Approval of Minutes: John moved to accept the November 7, 2022, minutes as written. Lew seconded and all voted in favor. Motion carried.

Public Business

Treasury Report:	Conservation	\$189,581.51
	Forestry	\$23,522.17
	Walker Road/Gateway	\$1,989.75

Alicia said last month she paid the Long View invoice for invasive species treatment at Walker Road from the Conservation account because there was not enough money in the Walker Road account to cover it.

New Business - none at this time

Old Business

Hooper Forest Update: Alicia has not heard from Alex Barrett about the Hooper Forest timber harvest. She suspects he's either very busy right now or has not had a positive response from the logger previously discussed. She does not have information from Alex to support either of those theories, however.

Commission Website: Kelli has been paid her deposit. Though she has been working on the website, progress has been delayed as she awaits comments and content from the commissioners. France and Steven reported they have sent Kelli their comments. Wendy pointed out that Kelli needs content to be able to continue. France stated she has already sent some. Alicia asked France to contact Kelli to find out exactly what information is needed. She agreed to do that. Alicia stated that, once they know this information, content can be distributed among commissioners, so that no one person is responsible for providing it. France stated she thinks the commission should have one or two coordinators to work with Kelli.

Alicia will invite Kelli to the February meeting after they have a chance to compile some of the content.

Other Business

Walpole Trails Subcommittee: Last month the committee planned events, trail work, and items to be taken care of in the year ahead. The tasks are laid out and appear on Google Docs.

Lew reported that he has done some tree clearing at High Blue. He said he also plans to meet with the Forest Society about becoming the co-steward of High Blue.

Reservoir Dam: John reported that Steve Dalessio has signed the grant paperwork for \$749,000 for dam repair. Cheryl stated that will cover 100% of the expenses. John also said Fuss and O'Neill has the permit for the DES ready to go. He said the state is anxious to get proof that the work can get underway in order to use the stimulus money. John said the town is "as shovel ready as we can possibly be to make this happen in 2023." The work will include the culvert, slope of the dam, center pipe removal, and spillway upgrade.

Alicia questioned where the commission's role of advisor to the select board stands because the commission, Mark Houghton, and the select board had been leaning toward dam removal, based on the Fuss and O'Neill final report and recommendations. Would it be wise to spend the money necessary for repair, knowing it would have to be done again in the future? If there were no grant money, would they be looking at removal rather than repair? Cheryl said it would come down to the cheaper option, perhaps with a vote of the public.

Alicia said she is having difficulty understanding why a decision has been made when they haven't even received a final report from Fuss and O'Neill yet. She believes a decision was made based on funding rather than good science.

Peter pointed out that when you serve on an advisory board, you need to be aware that your advice may not be taken. He feels that the issue here is, who is holding Fuss and O'Neill accountable for this report? Should they be paid if the dam is repaired before the report is done?

France said it would seem better economic sense to remove the dam. Since the cost of repair or removal is about the same, removing it eliminates future repair costs. Hence, the less expensive option.

Alicia asked if the state would have given them money if they had chosen removal. Steven said he thought there was state funding for dam removal. Cheryl said she would ask about it and get more information.

Other: Kara asked for an update on the Gateway. John is still talking to Mark Houghton about the turn-around/drop/off. John said he will have an estimate for the work at the January meeting. Lew offered to do the work pro bono if the Commission will cover costs for moving his equipment to the site as well as cover the cost of materials. That is only if Houghton's will not do the work in a timely manner in the spring.

John also spoke to Mike Rau about the timber stacked at the site. Mike told him if they can get it all picked up, there is a place on Alice Smith Road where it can be dumped. John said he would talk to a couple of people to get an estimate for removal.

John asked Lew if he had any information about pumping water out of reservoirs, streams, brooks by hydro seeding trucks. Lew said the hydro seeding company needs to get approval from the landowner to pump the water.

Steven asked about a survey for the Walker Road area. Alicia said it was not a priority. Lew said they should firm up the line before construction and Alicia added they should calculate the area of disturbance.

Wendy asked for a conservation easement update. Alicia reviewed the process and stated they will hire an intern to help. Peter said he would write a job description for the internship during his break. Wendy volunteered to help with the easement monitoring.

With no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 7:49 p.m.

The next meeting will be on Monday, January 9, 2023.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jean Kobeski, Recording Secretary

** These minutes are in draft form until approved at the January 9, 2023 meeting.