

**Minutes for the Regular Meeting of the
Walpole Conservation Commission
March 4, 2024**

Members Present: John Peska (facilitating), France Menk, Alicia Flammia, Wendy Grossman, Peter Palmiotto, Lewis Shelley

Members Absent: Steven Dumont

Alternates Present: Kara Dexter, Nicole Adams (recorder of minutes)

Visitors Present: Peggy Pschirrer (Selectboard Liaison), Will Grossman (presenter), Peter Dexter, Kris Snowman-Shelley

Call to Order: John called the meeting to order at 7:01pm in the Town Hall. This meeting was audio recorded for the purpose of taking accurate minutes.

Review and Approval of Minutes: Lew moved to accept the February minutes as written. France seconded and all voted in favor. Motion carried.

Public Business

There was no financial report reviewed this month.

Correspondence: A check was received from the Robert P Hubbard Conservation Commission Conservation Fund in the amount of \$9,555.97, which has been deposited into the Conservation Fund account.

A receipt was received from Long View Forest Contracting for timber harvesting in the amount of \$56,507.18. No action is required of the Commission. Peggy will pass the paperwork along to the Hooper Institute's Finance Manager.

New Business

Rail Trail presentation: Wendy and Will Grossman shared a presentation on the Rail Trail including its history, location, and approved uses; an overview of recent improvement efforts; state, regional and local stakeholder groups; options for continued maintenance and/or improvements in the future; and potential funding sources for improvements.

Wendy noted that drainage is significantly improved, usage seems to have increased, and there has been positive feedback on the recent improvements.

France asked that we find a way to make the information from the presentation available publicly, and Alicia noted that this could be a good way to engage the town and get feedback on what people want for the Rail Trail in the future. Wendy suggested a public presentation and a survey later in the season when the Rail Trail is in peak use.

Lew noted that he has some ideas for low-cost improvements that could potentially be funded via the Forestry Fund or Mason Forest Fund. Peter noted the potential for a joint

project with Westmoreland to improve the section that connects the two towns. Kara pointed out that it would be helpful to get insight on ADA accessibility needs for the trail. Wendy suggested pulling together a list of potential small/short term project opportunities to be shared with the Trail Committee for further discussion.

Alicia moved to continue maintenance of the Rail Trail in its current condition. France seconded and all voted in favor. Motion carried.

Commissioners and visitors enjoyed delicious carrot cake, courtesy of Pam and Jim Baucom, to celebrate the completion of the Rail Trail improvement project and to thank the commission for all the work it does for conservation in the Town.

Posting minutes protocol: Peter noted that meeting minutes need to be posted at the Town Hall and Post Office within 5 days of the meeting by sending the minutes via email to Sarah Downing and WCC members.

Master Plan - conservation lands table: Peter shared an updated draft list of “Land Areas Recommended for Protection” for inclusion in the Planning Board’s updated Master Plan, with proposed additions of the Houghton Brook Watershed Protection Corridor and the Rt 12 Green Corridor. Peter will extend the end points of all listed watershed protection corridors to the Connecticut River.

Peter noted that updates are also needed to the map of conserved lands and the corresponding table that are included in the Master Plan. Peter and Wendy will work together on that, in coordination with the Antioch University Spatial Analysis Lab which produces the map.

John made a motion to allocate up to \$200 to procure updated maps of Town and Conservation Lands via the Antioch Spatial Analysis Lab. Alicia seconded and all voted in favor. Motion carried.

Old Business

Website: France investigated hosting subscription options for the Commission website and found that the higher cost plan is not worthwhile, so the current plan will be renewed for this year. France confirmed that the plan includes back-end security protection.

Walpole Gateway: An opening date for the gate has not been set since it depends on spring road conditions. Conditions will be monitored, and the gate will be unlocked once conditions allow. Peter suggested that a public announcement be made in both the minutes and the Walpolean once the gate is unlocked.

Tom Beaudry will be invited to the April meeting to talk with the Commission about farming practices, and Holly Gowdy will be invited to discuss treatment of invasives. Based on the information shared, the Commission will revisit the topic of exploring options for use of the Gateway fields.

Fanny Mason: Lew is working on an RFP for replacing the roofs on both parking area pavilions. He has two bidders noted already and will line up a third soon and present the

RFP within the coming month. Green metal roofing is the preferred material option based on cost and maintenance requirements.

Peggy will confirm with Chief Sanctuary whether the police have wrapped up their investigation regarding the graffiti on the Fanny Mason pole barn and other locations in town. Once they have, the Commission will organize volunteers and procure supplies to have it painted over as soon as possible to discourage additional instances.

Dam updates: Updates were received from Fuss & O'Neill on all town projects except the Reservoir Dam. An update on that project is expected next month.

Ramsay Hill & Reservoir Road update: Wendy confirmed that the piles of brush and trees near the end of the road have been removed. Road conditions are somewhat improved but there are still ruts and puddles. Logging isn't done yet but should be within the next month, so no action is needed at this time.

Other Business

Walpole Trails Subcommittee: The second annual Help Our Trails Day is scheduled for May 4th, with additional details to be provided next month.

Transmission line replacement: Hilltop Public Solutions, in coordination with Liberty Utilities, presented a plan to the Select Board to replace high power transmission lines and towers between Charlestown and North Walpole. Work will not begin for 2+ years and there will be public hearings prior to the start of work.

Property purchase: A group from Keene has expressed interest in purchasing a piece of property in the vicinity of Fall Mountain to use for climbing outings. Representatives from the group are planning to join the next Conservation Commission meeting to share more information on their plan.

Thank you to both Peggy and Kara, whose terms are ending this month, for their service to the Commission!

The next meeting will be **Monday, April 1st, 2024** in the Town Hall.

Adjournment: With no further business to discuss, John adjourned the meeting at 8:34 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Nicole Adams, acting Recording Secretary

** These minutes are in draft form until approved at the April 1st, 2024 meeting.