

**Minutes for the Regular Meeting of the  
Walpole Conservation Commission  
August 2, 2021**

**Members Present:** John Peska, Lewis Shelley, , Steven Dumont, Laura Hayes, France Menk, Peter Palmiotto, Cheryl Mayberry (Selectboard Liaison), Jean Kobeski (Secretary)

**Members Absent:** Alicia Flammia

**Alternates Present:** Gary Speed, Kara Dexter

**Visitors Present:** Wendy and Will Grossman

**Call to Order:** John called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. in Town Hall, first floor.

**Review and Approval of Minutes:** Lew moved to accept the July 12, 2021 minutes. Laura seconded, and all voted in favor.

**Public Business**

**Treasury:** Conservation \$154,284.14  
Forestry 30,654.83  
Walker 3,364.25

**Correspondence:** John presented an invoice from Lew Shelley for Gateway bench materials in the amount of \$286.38. Steven moved to pay the invoice from the Gateway Fund. Peter seconded, and all voted in favor.

**New Business**

**Infestation of the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid:** Peter reported that he has spotted the hemlock woolly adelgid in various locations in Walpole. There is heavy infestation on Farnum Road. The hemlocks between Burdick's and the post office are also infested. This insect, native to Asia, has come up from the South through Connecticut. It takes 3-6 years to take out a tree, depending on infestation. It looks like a tiny white cottonball and sucks the sap from the trees.

Peter cited an article from *Adirondack Explorer*, which states that Cornell and other universities and state entomologists are trying to combat the insect by releasing three species of fruit fly-sized insects for biological control in New York state.

Peter has notified the Selectboard of this infestation and recommends budgeting for tree removal as the trees die. Since most of the affected trees are along roadways, they can become a road hazard. He said land owners are directed to the state for instructions if they have an infestation.

Peter said really long, cold winters can knock out the adelgid.

Laura added that the adelgid has been here since 2013. She stated that healthy hemlocks can fight it off. Infestation in Northern New England hasn't been too bad because of the cold winters.

Steven said the release of other insects is usually not effective against infestation. Laura stated that it has been successful against the Emerald Ash Borer.

Lew said he spotted the adelgid in Fitzwilliam, mostly in trees by the road. He said it is spread by

birds, so it's hard to control. Laura suggested this is another reason to take down bird feeders. She also said the elongate scale is another insect that attacks hemlocks. Lew asked Laura where she got her information and she stated the UNH Extension and [nhbugs.com](http://nhbugs.com). John asked if there were brochures to which people could refer while hiking and Peter said the state has a lot of information.

Cheryl announced that an arborist from Arbor Climb will be in Walpole either this Thursday or next to walk the common and assess the trees. A written report and plan will be developed afterwards.

### **Old Business:**

**Rail Trail Progress:** At a recent SW Regional Planning meeting, Cheryl asked which section of the rail trail will be worked on next. Maybe Keene will be next. Perhaps from there they will keep it going to Walpole and then to Bellows Falls. There is funding for rail trail improvements the government has set aside. Wendy Grossman added that she and Will are working with the Monadnock Regional Rail Trail Collaborative. She said Swanzey received a grant to do some excavation; Walpole had also applied for grant money. She said they are working with the state in order to get permission to brush hog the Walpole section of the rail trail. Cheryl recommended they talk with Henry Underwood of SW Regional Planning. He and Todd Horner were doing the Southern Cheshire Trail, and they would be good resources for the Grossmans.

John stated the Keene to Bellows Falls segment was competing with Keene to Brattleboro. They were not quite sure which they would start on next. Cheryl said Cheshire 19 North!

### **Other Business**

**Trail Clean-up:** Steven reported there was a successful 3-hour trail clean-up at Fanny Mason Forest last Saturday. They did some weed whacking and trimming and cleared trees near the pole barn. This will be the staging area for the forestry work that will be done there. Steven said the pole barn could serve as a rest area for bikers. Peter asked if the telephone poles could be taken down to make a longer greenway. Lew said it might be worth it to look at what it would cost to remove them. If they could take out the poles, they could be used for other purposes in the forest. John said they are reluctant to go after electrical poles due to the metal embedded in them.

Kara asked if there was any trash on the trail and Steven said there was none.

Steven also reported the maps are nearly done. He said the committee decided the Mill Pond should be the next trail clean-up. Lew trained everyone at the Mason clean-up on how to use loppers properly, so Steven said he would like to do it this year.

**Walk with Matt Tarr:** France said she sent the membership an email with notes and suggestions from the walk she and John took with Matt Tarr. John said Matt and the county forester would be available to help once Alex comes through with his invasive species plan. They can get everyone together to discuss the way ahead. Steven reminded everyone the next boundary marking days are September 25 and 26. Perhaps they can help with that.

John asked Lew if there was any equipment the commission still needs to do this work. Lew suggested a motorized brush cutter and a small chain saw, new loppers, and work gloves. John asked Lew and Steven to come up with a list and pricing for the next meeting.

**Brush Hogging the Rail Trail:** Steven said there are sections of the rail trail that need to be brush hogged. Should they put out bids for the work? How do they accomplish that? Wendy explained that there is a new person heading up the Bureau of Trails, so the state is revamping some regulations.

Some formal agreements need to be put in place before brush hogging is permitted. She said it can happen at any time. Some negotiations are going on now between the Bureau of Trails and the DOT. She said she and Will plan to follow up on that this week to see where they are. A formal agreement has to be signed before brush hogging can begin. Use of hand tools is okay. Wendy suggested having a plan in place so that if permission is given, brush hogging can take place this year. Wendy explained that the grant application includes the cost of one brush hogging because that is needed before trail work can be done. She said it would be good to make a plan for who would do it so it could be done on short notice, as long as it is before October. After that the snowmobile club will do some clearing.

Steven asked Lew how long it would take to weed whack. Lew said it would be better to use a walk behind and it's doable. Cheryl said the town has a walk behind; she will ask if the commission can use it. John said the town rents that equipment out to other towns.

Kara asked what happens if the grant is denied. Do they apply again? Wendy said that would not prevent them from doing the work, and brush hogging is independent of that. They could reapply or look for other areas of funding.

**Reservoir Dam:** John said the dam held up very well during the recent storm. He asked Cheryl if the town would ask for a federal declaration to recoup some of the losses. She said FEMA is coming to the region next week to assess the situation and wants people to document losses and take lots of pictures. Peter asked if they assess both public and private infrastructure, but Cheryl did not know. She said she could find out. She also said that if anyone knows anyone who suffered significant damage, they should send pictures to the selectboard to show FEMA.

John said the meeting is still scheduled for September 23 with Fuss and O'Neill, Mark Houghton, the state, and selectpersons to assess the Mill Pond and Reservoir dams. Designation of the Reservoir dam will be made following that meeting. The group will meet at the fire station at 10:00 on the 23rd.

**Walker Road:** Cheryl expressed her concern about public perception of the Gateway. As stated several times before, some community members feel that, since the gate is locked, the trail is closed to the public and the land is not being used. She feels that locking the gate sends a wrong message. She is particularly concerned that, as opportunities to acquire more land become available, this perception will interfere with these acquisitions.

A lengthy discussion ensued about letting vehicles drive down the road, the deed, and recreational opportunities. Cheryl feels it is time to hold the public forum that was scheduled last spring (and cancelled because of Covid) to educate the public about the property and management decisions. Good public relations is needed to explain why access has been limited.

The commission brainstormed ways to educate the community about this property:

- Hold the informational public forum
- Stage a public walk of the property
- Form a subcommittee of commission members and volunteers to address Gateway issues
- Post a good use/bad use sign on the kiosk
- Write an article for the Clarion explaining the limited access

Lew suggested a way of improving the trail to invite people to walk, rather than drive down the trail. He suggested creating a 3' wide sure packed gravel path. People could walk or even take kayak carts on the path down to the river.

Cheryl stated that the commission can change the wording of the deed to create greater access.

The membership agreed that the public forum needs to take place with the moderator Alicia contacted last spring. They will wait until she returns to the next meeting and plan this. In the meantime, Steven and Laura will write the article for the next Clarion.

**Adjournment:** With no further business to discuss, John adjourned the meeting at 8:33 p.m.

**The next meeting will be on Monday, September 13, 2021, at 7:00 p.m. in Town Hall.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Jean Kobeski, Recording Secretary

\*\*\* These minutes are in draft form until approved by the Commission on September 13, 2021.

