

## WEATHERSFIELD CONSERVATION COMMISSION MINUTES 4/23/2020

April 23, 2020

Meeting called to order at 7:10 PM and adjourned at 9:01 PM

Attending (via GoToMeeting): Heather Shand, Jeff Pelton, Tyler Harwell, Cheryl Cox, Howard Beach, Roy Burton, Brandon Gulnick and Ryan Gumbart

APPROVAL OF MINUTES, MARCH 2020 MEETING- Minutes were accepted without amendment.

THANK YOU TO TINA WOOD FOR HER TIME ON THE COMMISSION- Tina was on the commission for 15 years. A thank you note and a plant was suggested. Cheryl will inquire with Woodbury Florist about what they are offering at this time. Brandon suggested a town plaque for residents who have served for a long time. Cheryl offered to drop off the plaque, plant and thank you note.

UPDATE OF TRAIL IN NAME OF HARRY TEMPLE- Tyler has proposed the creation of a deeded hiking trail right of way to the summit of Hawks Mountain in commemoration of Harry Temple. The project may include the Whittemore name as well. Trails may connect to larger network of trails including a snowmobile trail that runs along the ridge. Tyler will contact the landowners for potential access and Steve Aikenhead about walks he has led to the summit. Howard will contact Vermont Fish & Wildlife about trail creation. If access is not obtained, the Weathersfield Town Forest may be an alternative for a memorial trail.

STREAM/BROOK NAME PROJECT UPDATE- Jeff reported that the public notification aspect of the project is on hold due to COVID-19. The commission needs to determine whether or not to include other water features such as falls, fords, dams, etc. Howard and Cheryl have reported work they have done on the watersheds but research into historical names and ownerships is on hold due to COVID-19.

MT ASCUTNEY RECREATION AREA PLAN UPDATE- The group is designing a hiking trail to go entirely around Mt. Ascutney. Heather read from a report that this may include gaining access through the Weathersfield Town Forest. The trail may include part of Thrasher Road to avoid private lands. Brandon reported on the state of gaining access to the town forest off of Thrasher Road. The deed and trail easement have been signed and recorded with the town. The selectboard is waiting for the State to produce, in writing, their approval. There may be issues pertaining to the parking lot area related to the unknown location of a septic tank. It was suggested that the commission contact Willis and Tina Wood for assistance on ownership and prior issues of tax delinquency. Brandon raised the question of who will be constructing the parking lot. Potential options include the Highway Department or paid contractors with forest recreation grant money. Brandon reported that a permit from the state to work on access to the town forest expires at the end of the fiscal year (June 30th). It was suggested that signage for the trail within the town forest be consistent with other Sport Trails of the Ascutney Basin (STAB) signage. A sign maker in Windsor makes their trail signs.

TOWN FOREST TRAIL WORK DAY, SATURDAY, MAY 16- Jeff has contacted STAB about how they are handling trail work regarding COVID-19.

TREASURER'S REPORT- No official report was available for this meeting. Heather mentioned that there is a couple hundred dollars in the account that should be spent by June 30<sup>th</sup>. Heather suggested a trail sign on the town line as hikers enter the Weathersfield Town Forest from the Mt. Ascutney State Park. One option would be to use the sign maker in Windsor unless they only make trail tags. It was also suggested that a local woodworker with a router could make the sign. Tyler suggested the state park system likely makes their own signs and may be willing to make one for that location. Heather recommends the commission continue to think about options for spending the money.

SUMMER HIKE OR WORKSHOPS TO BE SPONSORED BY THE WCC- Jeff would like to lead a walk to the Little Ascutney Cliffs, as well as a walk in the Weathersfield WMA off Roberts Road. Jeff suggested a talk on beaver activities as it pertains to interfering with human infrastructure. He suggested the talk could be given by Skip Lisle designer of the "Beaver Deceiver" or a state environmentalist in Springfield. Kelly Stetner of the Black River Action Committee (BRAC) has mentioned having a similar talk, so it may be possible to co-sponsor with BRAC. Ryan suggested leading a walk on powerline ecosystems as wildlife habitat.

UPCOMING CONFERENCES/WORKSHOPS- Most conferences and workshops have been postponed or canceled due to COVID-19.

OTHER/NEW BUSINESS- Commission members Jeff and Roy picked up several tires and bags of trash on Earth Day and brought them to the transfer station. It was suggested that the commission invite the new Town Land Use Administrator to a future conservation commission meeting.

Next WCC Meeting: May 28, 2020, at 7:00 PM, Location TBD

Respectfully Submitted,

Ryan Gumbart