

WEATHERSFIELD CONSERVATION COMMISSION MINUTES
DECEMBER 3, 2020

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT: Heather Shand, Jeff Pelton, Cheryl Cox, Howard Beach and Ryan Gumbart

ATENDEES: Brandon Gulnick (Town Manager) and Olivia Savage (Principal Clerk)

Meeting called to order at 7:08 PM and adjourned at 8:28 PM

APPROVAL OF MINUTES, October 2020 MEETING: Jeff corrected a mistake in the section titled "OTHER/NEW BUISNESS". Jeff has spent time volunteering with BRAT and has conducted testing in the North Branch of the Black River rather than in the Stoughton Pond swimming area.

BACTERIA FLYER: Not discussed.

TOWN FOREST DISCUSSION ITEMS:

WEATHERSFIELD/ATA COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT: Brandon asked the commission members about their thoughts on the agreement. It was agreed that the language in the agreement promotes the ATA over Weathersfield. The agreement refers to the trail system to be constructed within the Town Forest as the "ATA trail system". It is recognized that the ATA will be doing a large share of the physical construction and they may refer to the broad network of trails which they are involved in as such, however, the commission would like the agreement to refer to the trails in a way that clearly indicates that the trails are owned and managed by the Town of Weathersfield. Brandon raised questions about the ATA gaining permission and the process that will be followed to initiate projects. It was determined that the agreement will need to be rewritten to meet the satisfaction of the Town. Brandon offered to rewrite the agreement to be proposed to the ATA.

OTHER: Howard asked Brandon about the status of the Abbott Land. Brandon has proposed two options to the Selectboard. Option 1 would be to amend the purchase and sale agreement and option 2 would void the agreement and hold a tax sale. Neither option was approved by the Selectboard at a past meeting. Brandon has made changes and will present the amended proposals at the next Selectboard meeting.

Jeff asked Brandon if he had been informed about the status of "Rick's Road", the access road through Ascutney State Park. Brandon has not been involved in the agreement between the State Park and the ATA. Jeff expressed an interest in receiving confirmation from the State that Rick's Road is in fact open to the public year-round to provide access to the Town Forest. Ryan will contact Stan Spencer and Ethan Phelps regarding this issue.

UPDATE OF TRAIL/LANDMARK IN NAME OF HARRY TEMPLE: Not discussed due to Ellen Clattenburg's absence.

WCC SPONSORED WORKSHOP/HIKE IDEAS:

OUTDOOR ANIMAL TRACKING WORKSHOP (HEATHER): Heather spoke with Alison Thomas, VT State Educational Programs Coordinator, who was willing to lead an educational talk/walk about animal tracking. The commission will need to select a date and location. It was suggested that a weekend in late February or March would be good timing for finding tracks in the snow. A location has yet to be determined, Stoughton Pond Recreation Area and the Town Forest were suggested however more information will need to be gathered regarding the plowing of roads, parking, etc.

FALL/WINTER: BEAVER DECIEVER (RYAN): Ryan spoke with Tyler Brown, VT State Furbearer Project Technician, who was willing to lead an educational talk/walk about beaver management and their impact on human infrastructure. Tyler suggested that winter would be best to be able to walk out onto the ice but anytime of year would be fine. The commission will need to select a date and location. Late March was suggested to spread out the commission's events. Cook's Pond behind the Center Meeting House was suggested but Ryan will follow up to check on public access and explore other options.

SOCIAL DISTANCED WEATHERSFIELD TOWN FOREST SNOWSHOE HIKE (JEFF): Jeff suggested that this event be postponed due to COVID-19.

OTHER/NEW BUISNESS: Jeff is trying to wrap up the stream naming project. He asked the commission for permission to post an ad in the newspaper and on Front Porch Forum to gather more input from the public. The commission approved.

Next WCC Meeting: January 28, 2021, at 7:00 PM, Location TBD

Respectfully Submitted,

Ryan Gumbart