

WEATHERSFIELD CONSERVATION COMMISSION MINUTES

June 25, 2020

Attending: Heather Shand, Jeff Pelton, Roy Burton, Ellen Clattenburg, Cheryl Cox, Tyler Harwell and Ryan Gumbart

Meeting called to order at 7:10 PM and adjourned at 8:40 PM

APPROVAL OF MINUTES, MAY 2020 MEETING: Minutes were accepted with the following amendments. The Town Forest discussion item regarding trail markers described the use of lead paint which should be used for boundary marking rather than trail signs. Additionally, to be added to the May meeting minutes, a black bear was briefly in attendance at the Center Meetinghouse.

UPDATE OF TRAIL/LANDMARK IN NAME OF HARRY TEMPLE: A lookout along a trail on Mt. Ascutney will be named in memory of Harry Temple. Ellen has been in contact with Tim Morton and waiting for further response.

TOWN FOREST DISCUSSION ITEMS:

-TOWN FOREST WORKING GROUP TO BE FORMED: Jeff and Ryan will recruit a group of forest stewards from various stake holders to assist with the maintenance and management of the Town Forest. Other groups that should be contacted include Parks & Rec., Weathersfield Preservation Society, landowners in town, etc. This group will also provide representation at Selectboard Meetings.

-POTENTIAL SIGN MAKERS: It was suggested that it may be worth looking into who makes signs for other groups such as Parks & Rec. or Upper Valley Land Trust. In conversation with an Ascutney Trails Association (ATA) member who is also a teacher at Windsor High School, Jeff discovered that a shop student may have an interest and the ability to make signs. Additionally, Stan Spencer from the ATA has a vinyl cutter and may be able to make trail tags.

-POWERLINE MOW BY STAB: Jeff informed the Commission that Sports Trails of the Ascutney Basin (STAB) has merged into the ATA. Previously a STAB volunteer brush cut the powerline and is interested in cutting again.

-OTHER: The ATA wants to construct a beginner's mountain bike trail in the Weathersfield Town Forest. Eventually it may become connected to a trail network that circumnavigates Mt. Ascutney. A group from Windsor, West Windsor and Weathersfield who are interested in recreation as a means of boosting the local economy proposed a trailhead for the Town Forest from the Ascutney State Park Swoops and Loops Trail parking lot. This access trail would pass around the edge of the State Park campground on an established access road. The ATA is preparing a proposal to the State for the creation of this connection. Stan Spencer reported to Jeff that he had heard from a trail runner that the Town Forest had many trees down and several are across the trails. There was likely a strong wind event and the ATA offered to clean up the debris. There has been some confusion regarding the Right-of-Way easement for access to the south of the Town Forest. The survey map shows two options for trail access, one of them is through a wetland and the other bypasses the wetland. The dry trail would be the better option for access however only the wet option is described in the written description of the Right-of-Way easement. It was discussed that the Town will likely mow and maintain the access once it

is established because it begins in the Town Right-of-Way along Thrasher Road. The parking lot location for the trailhead needs a site assessment to determine the location of a septic tank. If the proposed location is not feasible then the parking lot will be moved to the secondary location, at the edge of the landowner's hay field.

WCC SPONSORED WORKSHOP/HIKE IDEAS:

-CONSIDER SPONSORING A GAME OF LOGGING CERTIFICATION COURSE: It was suggested that the WCC host a Game of Logging Certification course. Such certification may allow for WCC members to operate power equipment when working on town land such as the Town Forest. It may be worthwhile to recruit members of the public who are interested in the Town Forest Working Group. Other parties that may be interested in certification include local technical school students, however, they may be restricted by school day length. It was suggested that Tim Morton may have site options for the felling of trees. Ryan will look into the cost of the course and site requirements, as well as check with Brandon Gulnick to determine if the certification will satisfy the towns requirements for members to operate equipment on town land.

-SOCIAL DISTANCE TOWN FOREST HIKE: Jeff would like to lead a hike to the Little Ascutney Talus but needs to do an exploratory hike first. Approval should be obtained from the town to see if such a hike would be permitted at this time.

-OTHER: It was suggested that Skip Lyle, creator of the beaver deceiver, do a talk on beavers and their impact on human infrastructure. A state environmentalist in Springfield may also be able to contribute. A winter time bear education talk could be given as part of a seasonal series of programs. Emerald Ash Borer is a growing concern and the commissions public outreach should continue. An Earth Day event should be held as part of the seasonal program series. A talk about various members of the weasel family was also suggested.

MISCELLANIOUS PROJECT UPDATES, REVIEW SPENDING IDEAS: There has been no response yet regarding mowing at the Center Meeting House. It was suggested that the \$410 in the commissions account be used to reimburse the STAB volunteers for their fuel costs during their trail maintenance last October. Jeff will follow up on payment via gift card. It was motioned that the commission reimburse the STAB volunteers for fuel use during trail maintenance from last October. It was seconded and the motion passed.

There was discussion regarding the drainage project occurring on Bowen Hill. A landowner complained about damage to trees along the drainage ditch. He had asked the commission if the drainage project had come before it. Ray Stapleton has been notified about the complaint and will be in contact with the landowner.

Next WCC Meeting: July 23, 2020, at 7:00 PM, Location TBD

Respectfully Submitted,

Ryan Gumbart