

Conservation Commission
Minutes—Corrected June, 25, 2020
May 28, 2020

Present: Heather Shand, Roy Burton, Howard Beach, Jeff Pelton, Ellen Clattenburg, and Cheryl Cox

Absent: Tyler Harwell and Ryan Gumbart

Guest: John Arrison

The meeting was called to order by Heather at 7:05 pm, interrupted a short while later by a bear sighting, and then called back to order.

Approval of minutes, April 2020 meeting

The minutes of the April 23 meeting were reviewed. All agreed that they were excellent. One typo was reported: Kelly Stettner's organization is BRAT (Black River Action Team) and not BRAC. Roy moved to accept the minutes as presented with that one correction. Jeff seconded the motion that then passed unanimously.

Summer maintenance recommendation for the Center Grove

John Arrison spoke with us about the condition of the trees in the Grove. He explained past attempts to protect the trees, but believes we are not taking care of the trees as well as we could. He led a tour of the Grove and pointed out tree damage. Most detrimental is soil compaction and aggressive lawn mowing. A minimalist approach to maintenance of the Grove is preferred and would include scheduling mowing twice each year (once in June and a second in late August/early September), mowing regularly around church and monument only, allowing accumulation of leaves and mulch around trees, applying fertilizer yearly, alerting snowplow drivers to take care not to hit trees, removing dead limbs from trees to protect visitors, and posting "no parking on grass" signs.

Heather moved that Cheryl draft a letter to the Brandon Gulnick and the Ray Stapleton with recommendations for protecting the trees in the Grove. Ellen seconded the motion that then passed unanimously. It was then suggested that the letter should be reviewed by Sally Taylor, President of the Weathersfield Center Church, and Willis Wood for their input.

Update of trail/landmark in name of Harry Temple

Ellen has been in touch with Tim Morton, who is receptive to the idea of naming a place on an Ascutney trail in Harry's name. Some ideas have been presented, including a lookout on the Weathersfield Trail that Jeff suggested. Ellen will explore this further with Tim.

Town Forest discussion items

Jeff has composed a list of things that could be done in the Town Forest. It is not a whole list and tasks do not have to be done at once. It is as follows:

- Pro bono woodworker signs: We should erect a sign at the entrance to the Town Forest. Eventually we should have a kiosk with maps and information.
- Trail markers: Steve Giroux made signs for STAB. Perhaps he could do the same for the Town Forest. Discussion ensued about whether to keep signs similar to STAB. Roy said that if trails were to be blazed, paint with a high lead content should be used as it would last longer.

- Use of outhouse: Jeff contacted John Fay of the Vermont's Department of Environmental Conservation about opening the outhouse. There are specific criteria that must be met before it can be opened.
- Beginner mountain bike corridor: Jim Lyall offered to flag and design a beginner trail.
- Wetland bypass trail: Rebecca Chalmers looked at the wetlands and said we wouldn't need a permit for a trail if it went into the woods and bypassed the wetland.
- Pro bono engineer work: We should find a civil engineer to do a cabin review.

Ellen moved that Jeff work with STAB to make a beginner mountain bike trail. Cheryl seconded the motion that then passed unanimously.

Ellen next suggested that we find a sign maker as it would be good to have an entrance sign up this summer. Howard will approach Bob Holtorf and Heather will ask the Upper Valley Land Trust for suggestions.

Treasurer's report

Roy reported that there is \$410 left from the budgeted \$500. There is \$1750.44 in the reserve fund. Materials for signs for the Town Forest could come out of these funds.

Miscellaneous project updates

Ellen did some research about the brook behind the Plains Cemetery and will talk to Ginger Wimberg and Willis Wood about it. Jeff said that there is a hold on the stream naming project because of restrictions on public meetings, etc. due to the pandemic.

Other/new business

Jeff suggested that we plan a social distancing hike through the Town Forest sometime this summer. Heather said we should mow a path through the power line first to discourage ticks.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:25 pm with a motion made by Howard and seconded by Heather.

Respectfully submitted,
Cheryl Cox