

Weathersfield Conservation Commission

January 27, 2022

Meeting convened in person at the Town Office and virtually at:

<https://www.weathersfieldvt.org/home/news/public-meetings-zoom>

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

The meeting was convened at 7:06 pm by Jeff Pelton.

Approval of minutes, December meeting: Roy Burton moved, Howard Beach seconded the motion to accept the December minutes. All voted in favor.

Town Forest:

- Cabin demolition: The cabin can be demolished, probably by volunteers over a number of sessions, starting with removing wiring, propane piping, then the metal roof. However, it would be more efficacious to use some equipment to do this work – an excavator or heavy tractor with a winch. Access is the biggest issue, especially in winter. Snow over the wet area by the Abbott house has probably insulated that wet area and prevented it from freezing. Pushing the snow off would allow it to freeze. From the other (State Park) side, the steep banks of the stream crossing present a challenge. Plan is to

- check with Rebecca Chalmers, Wetland division, Department of Environmental Conservation for Windsor County. If the snow is removed from the wet spot near the Abbotts and the ground freezes, could we cross there with equipment? Also share with her the maps from the ATA and the work on getting trails into compliance
- Check with Town counsel to see about volunteers using power equipment in the Town Forest
- Jeff Pelton and Ryan Gumbart will walk in and make a plan

- Management plan for the Town Forest- Ryan met with Hannah Dallas, Windsor County Forester, in the Town Forest to discuss a plan for our Town Forest. Roy Burton, who had worked on the Windsor Town Forest, noted that her plan for that forest was exceptional. Hannah will pull together the context and history, she'll lay out a grid and study the whole town forest, showing us areas we have not been able to explore. As with Paradise Park, she'll review the invasives and suggest how to deal with them. Ryan will ask her to study the power line corridor and suggest who to work with on this. Ryan Gumbart put in a positive plug for power line corridors which actually can be beneficial wildlife habitats. Ryan Gumbart will invite Hannah Dallas to a meeting as this will be the most efficient way to give her guidelines on what we are looking for. As part of her plan will be forest management involving future harvesting, Jeff Pelton suggested that Hannah give a workshop in the town forest on forest management for interested Weathersfielders.

- Kiosk construction – Bibens will donate kiosk materials. Following Matt Keniston’s suggestion, Jeff Pelton will pick up the materials in the spring, ask 3-4 people to help, build it in a morning, take it to the entrance on a pick up, then erect it

Land acquisition: what is the history of the WCC and land preservation? In her plan Liz Thompson had suggested protecting certain areas by acquiring them. Ryan Gumbart wondered whether the conservation commission has ever worked on conserving land. Ellen Clattenburg described the conservation commission’s efforts in the late 80’s, early 90s to assist interested landowners in putting conservation easements on their land. She also thought there was a small fund for land acquisition in town that Steve Aikenhead and Willis Wood had started. Howard Beach will look for the potential of protecting open spaces in the planning regs.

Old roads: Ancient Roads Inventory 2005-2015. There was brief discussion about the project and Ryan noted both sides of the issue for landowners and townspeople.

Grant opportunities: Ryan suggested we consider having a project on standby. When a grant opportunity arises, there’s often limited time to submit an application. Suggestions included maps, outreach to kids, trails.

WCC sponsored workshop/hike ideas: Coming up sooner than we think will be warm spring evenings with amphibians crossing roads. No action was taken but there was interest from the commission protecting key road crossings on warm rainy nights.. Maybe seek advice from Liz Thompson? What about a vernal pool workshop – someone to help identify egg masses, amphibians; apple tree pruning: domestic and/or freeing up wild apples on the Little Ascutney Wildlife Management Area – Fish and Wildlife could help here. What about a workshop with Hank Ainley and Marina Garland? Ellen Clattenburg will check with them.

Other/new business: Heather Shand’s and Roy Burton’s terms are up. They need to be reappointed. Heather has sent an email about this to the Town Office for both of them.

Waterway naming: Jeff Pelton had sent out the latest version of this massive project. He was commended for his outstanding work which has taken time, research, good writing, and persistence. Jeff outlined the next steps – 47 petitions (one for each waterway) need 25 signatures each. Jeff will post information on the Front Porch Forum, Town website, and have petitions ready to sign in as many places and times as possible.

Adjourn: At 8:37 pm Ellen Clattenburg moved, Roy Burton seconded the motion to adjourn, which was unanimous.

Next meeting: February 24, 2022 at 7:00 PM. The location TBD