

WEATHERSFIELD CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Meeting Notes – July 28, 2022

Location: Weathersfield Center Meeting House

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

Guest: Matt Pronovost

Minutes of June 23, 2022: Howard Beach moved that the minutes be approved as sent, Cheryl Cox seconded, and all voted in favor of approval.

Town Forest

1. The Town Forest - VELCO walk 2 weeks ago was a success. There were 5 presenters (two from Vermont Center for Ecostudies sent two experts, bird and bee) and the people who showed up were mostly people who had powerlines running through their properties and had questions and concerns. Ryan Gumbart will be following up with Devon Snyder, their ecologist, about interpretive signage. Power lines present an opportunity to have relatively rare (but important for wildlife) shrubland. The power line passage through the Town Forest is too small to be important for early successional bird species (ie, birds that are dependent on early successional habitats), but it is good for pollinators. The invasives are the primary concern for wildlife and diversity of species. VELCO described their method of mechanical control and selective use of herbicides.
2. Kiosk and trails - The second annual Flow State Mountain Bike Festival will be held in Brownsville by the ATA July 29-31. The ATA weed whacked the trails so that they are ready for the bikers. (No mowing necessary as a result.)
3. The Right of Way by the Abbotts on Thrasher Road is still up in the air so no action will be taken to create a boardwalk. However, Matt Pronovost said that the ATA can either build it or have someone build it when we are ready.
4. The ATA is beginning to work on an intermediate loop trail in the Town Forest. Matt cautioned that if grant money is involved, it could take some time to secure that and get started.
5. Stream crossing in the Town Forest – there was brief discussion about the merits of moving the stream crossing up a bit where the slope down to the stream is less pronounced. This would allow a ford (stones in the waterway) rather than a bridge to be constructed (which could wash out). It would also make it easier for tractors or other equipment to get from one side to the other – the slopes at the current crossing are steep.
6. Kiosk - Jeff Pelton has turned the coordination of the kiosk over to Roy Burton who will contact Matt Keniston to arrange a time (might be down the line a bit). Roy has the list of materials to get from Bibens. The construction will be in three parts and done at Matt's. Ryan offered to pick up the three sections and deliver them to the entrance to the Town Forest when they are completed.

7. Deer enclosure: County Forester Hannah Dallas has the materials for a deer enclosure – secured through a grant – and will hold them through the winter. It will be constructed next year in the Town Forest 7-1/2 foot high fence, 25 feet square. The State will do the installation. Hannah would like to coordinate this with some active management of the Town Forest. It will be set up in the dead pine area, easy to access, low lying, and it will be close enough for people to walk by and observe the differences in regeneration within and without the enclosure. This enclosure (which will be mentioned in the management plan and the management plan itself (when completed) will be presented to the town and selectboard. Some trees might need to be removed to provide more light, less falling branches – but all this remains to be seen when the inventory is completed and the plan completed
8. Cabin removal – Brandon Gulnick has given Ryan Gumbart a letter so we can take the materials to the transfer station, probably in September. In addition, Ryan will speak to Brandon about the procedure for selling the copper from the cabin.

Waterway naming project

Jeff requested comments on his proposed letter to the town residents but three points to include are that we are following USGS protocol procedure in the naming project; (USGS authorized in 1897 and 1947). The Vermont Department of Libraries prepared the petitions and followed their requirements; many of the geographic features in town (including waterways) already were named, we were completing this work; and the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation had requested that we complete the naming of waterways.

Jeff reviewed the procedures for naming that the project followed (most came from the 1940 Ernest Butterfield Map of Weathersfield).

There was discussion of whether intermittent and permanent streams are regulated in the same way (this will be double checked). The USGS maps do not distinguish between intermittent and permanent waterways. Jeff will be checking with a few state individuals and groups, including the Vermont Rivers Program just to be double sure of our facts.

Winter talk:

Jeff and Roy are working on finding a speaker for the fall. There was some discussion about who might do it as several people are unavailable.

ARPA fund proposal

Ryan will look into the cost of building a stream crossing; Ellen will look into the cost of interpretive signs for the Town Forest; Heather will look into the cost of benches for the Town Forest. We will get a template for applying for funds from Brandon and Ellen will write the request.

Budget:

It will cost us approximately \$600 to send out a landowner letter about the project. The Town Office will help with printing and mailing.

Heather reminded the WCC that the Annual Conservation Commission meeting will be coming up and we should pay for a couple members of the WCC to attend.

New Business

Ryan had received an inquiry about tire recycling: Claremont offers this once a year – Ellen will check with Claremont.

Northern Woodlands having a field day in Thetford on August 20.

Howard Beach moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Cheryl Cox. The meeting was adjourned at 8:33 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Ellen Clattenburg