

Weathersfield Conservation Commission

Thursday, January 26, 2023

Weathersfield Proctor Library & by

Zoom – Town web page, code 8021

Present: Ryan Gumbart, Howard Beach, Heather Shand, Roy Burton, Jeff Pelton, Cheryl Cox, Ellen Clattenburg, as well as guests Jason Rasmussen, Martha Harrison

Minutes: Ryan requested a change to the October 27, 2022 minutes. Heather Shand moved and Howard Beach seconded the motion to accept the minutes as corrected. All voted in favor.

The November 9, 2022 minutes had no corrections. Heather Shand moved, and Ryan Gumbart seconded the motion to accept these minutes and all voted in favor.

MARC (Mount Ascutney Area Regional Recreation Consortium) Recreation Plan:

- Jason Rasmussen and Martha Harrison were there to follow up with the Conservation Commission on progress made on this recreation plan which was developed 2018-2019, a product of collaboration among the three towns, West Windsor, Windsor, Weathersfield, as well as the SE Group, the Southern Windsor County Regional Commission. Jason was specifically interested in what has been implemented.
- Trail-Around-The-Mountain

This was the top project in the recreation plan: a trail around Mount Ascutney (14-18 miles). It was rated the highest as it was deemed that the trail would give the biggest bang for the buck. Jason noted that getting approval to cross private land can be hard, but Ryan reported that the ATA has run into some problems with the State Forest - the ATA's suggestions for routes have been denied twice. Ryan will revisit the proposed trail map with the State foresters. Apparently the State is concerned about border porosity and maintaining areas that could be logged (i.e. forest where no trails run through).

Martha will set up a meeting with representatives from each town, the ATA, and the State to identify specific roadblocks. If roadblocks prohibit moving forward at this time, check other recreation plan priorities.

- Utilize existing trails and ancient roads in towns - another opportunity to enhance recreational opportunities. This was only briefly discussed.

- Town Forest Master Plan - while a parking area on Thrasher Rd and entrance to the Town Forest from Thrasher Rd are no longer planned, the Recreation Plan suggested more trails and specifically a novice terrain for biking and hiking – and this has been moving forward vis: Cloudspin, developed by the ATA.
- Access to the Connecticut River - The Conservation Commission has been thinking about this and have discussed with a Connecticut River commission (we could not remember which). Perhaps we can make some progress on this with mitigation funds from the relicensing process. For now, there is access in Springfield, Claremont, Windsor, Hartland, and through Wilgus State Park in Weathersfield.
- Moving forward, the WCC will meet with the ATA and we will keep regional planners informed. The RPC will reconvene the people who were willing to talk to landowners if that would be helpful.

Town Forest

- Hannah Dallas wants to lead a town forest walk – Saturday, February 18. Need to advertise this once we have a specific time. She's hoping to lead several walks throughout the year.
- Cabin - one more day of work is needed to remove the rest of the cabin. Brandon Gulnick wants a soil test done where the outhouse was, but he will take care of this. There was a complaint made to the Select Board about the cabin removal since it has been used by some individuals during hunting season. Ryan met with this individual, explained the reasoning behind removing the cabin, and pointed out that the project is regularly reported in the minutes. The Select Board agreed that taking down the cabin was the right thing to do. The WCC recommitted to reporting to the Select Board about ongoing projects twice a year.
- Fire department: Chief Darrin Spaulding had some requests for fire safety: he wants a key to the gate that goes to Rick's Road. He'll talk to the State Park. And he wondered who would be responsible for rescuing someone in the Town Forest. Ellen will pursue this. Darrin also suggested closing the ATA trails to mountain biking during hiking season - we will talk about this. Finally, we wondered about events in the park and who gets that notification.

Town Forest Sign Project

- Ellen will add a column, put in a page break, round up to \$8,000 and then we need to present this to the Select Board.

Waterway naming project

- We discussed each appendix, made some suggestions (executive summary, title pages and explanations for each appendix, remove unnecessary appendices, etc) and Jeff will make final corrections. He'll present his final copy to us. Then the project will need to be presented to the Select Board with the goal of their approving sending the project forward to the state for their vetting. Timeline for the Select Board will be sometime after Town Meeting (check their agenda to be sure it is not overly full) and we should be prepared to show public support for this project.

Land Use update

- The next Planning commission meeting is Feb. 13 to review the energy section of the Town Plan – read and bring questions if we have them or send them to Ryan. Jeff asked about geothermal heat and Howard noted it was brought up but deemed not feasible from a financial perspective.
- Also the Planning Commission will be reviewing the PUD section. Habitat For Humanity will be putting in a PUD at the Top Hat restaurant site. Ryan suggested looking at how Brattleboro handles PUDs with different types of PUD for village and affordable housing, campus style PUD, and conservation zone PUD. This can be found in the Planning Commission meeting packet on the Town website.

Budget:

- Waterway mailings were \$800+. Our budget is \$1100 leaving us about \$300 for the rest of the year.

Adjournment: Howard moved to adjourn, Heather seconded the motion and all voted in favor at 8:55 pm.

Meeting notes respectfully submitted by WCC secretary Ellen Clattenburg.