

Weathersfield Conservation Commission

Thursday, February 22, 2024

Weathersfield Proctor Library

Present: Ryan Gumbart, Howard Beach, Cheryl Cox, Bruce Cox, Marina Garland, Ellen Clattenburg

Visitor: Wendy Reuter-Lorenz, representing the Ascutney Trail Association

Minutes: Cheryl moved, and Howard seconded the motion to accept the minutes of July 27, 2023 & January 25, 2024 as submitted. All voted in favor.

WCC Project review: commissioners volunteered to head the efforts on the following WCC projects:

- Walks - Ellen, Anna
- Waterway naming - Howard, Ryan
- Town Forest Kiosk - Bruce and Cheryl
- Tree crew - Marina and Ellen

Ascutney Trail Association (not on agenda): Wendy Reuter-Lorenz

Wendy reported that the ATA has recently received a \$5,000 trail building grant and they are looking for ideas.

Ideas suggested to her were:

- Trail ascending the slope, starting at the powerline and going up (Stan had earlier flagged a trail in this direction, but when he reached the talus slope, the going got tricky and required a trail builder to figure it out)
- An intermediate trail on the other side of the ravine at the end of Cloudspin
- Cheryl had spoken with the Act 250 coordinator about the town forest trails and said that unless the trails themselves encompassed more than 10 acres or crossed a wetland, they will not trigger a review
- Ryan thought a priority would be to take the legal steps required to get a permit to cross the wetland off of Cloudspin (the trail to lead to another trail) or to reroute around this wetland. We gave Wendy the contact for Rebecca Chalmers, a district Wetlands Ecologist in the Springfield Office to get started on this process.
- A number of commissioners said to Wendy that they'd like plenty of area within the Town Forest without trails to give people a chance to see relatively untouched forest grow.
- Wendy promised to come back later with updates.

Town Forest:

Ryan said that the roof of the kiosk will need to be redone.

Marina wondered whether logging the Town Forest was worth it - to make it revenue neutral, would the better trees have to be cut to pay for the difficult access? Isn't there something to be said for promoting old growth?

Ryan explained that the lower side of the Town Forest had lots of invasives and poor quality pines, we would lose nothing cutting these. He noted that Hannah will make a plan that calls for harvesting (her ideal take on

what would be best for the forest) and we could use this as a guide to release trees. We could do the silviculture work without the harvesting by using volunteers..

Town forest interpretive signs will likely not get funded through ARPA. Should we pay for it out of our budget? (No, we do not have enough funds for this, the metal frames are about \$600 each.) But if we could have interpretive signs a few more ideas would be ones which explain about the land formerly being sheep pasture (sheep boom, etc.) and the history of forest succession.

Deer enclosure - 10-12 feet high, cedar posts, 20 x 20 feet - near Cloudspin where the pines are dying and deer pressure is great.

Invasives - something we should deal with – and in the woods they are not so dense that we could not control some through pulling.

Back to WCC Projects:

Tree planting added to project list - single or multiple trees. Ryan reported that there are three urban community grants, all due in January. Not all would be pertinent. Anything to do with the Center Grove should be cleared or coordinated with Ray. Other possible planting sites include the school (ask them), Hoisington field, etc. Source of saplings? Is there a tree sale day in VT? Ellen to look into Tiny Grants from the Association of Vermont Conservation Commissions. Check with people involved and see if an interpretative sign at the Salmond Covered Bridge park would be a good idea.

Waterway naming project - It needs to be on the Select Board agenda; Ryan will continue to try to make that happen. First item is to work with the selectboard so they are on board from the beginning.

Town Forest Kiosk - it could use information on ticks, map(s), powerline education, rules and regs, is there a town policy that needs to be listed? And the roof needs redoing

New member packet - digital and paper copy. Bruce will send over some comments after Ryan sends him a Word version of the packet. No changes or suggestions other than Bruce's.

Agricultural products - Ellen and Ryan will work on this one.

Recreation inventory publication - create a map of opportunities in town

Town walks - Anna and Ellen - advertise, get people to clear trails ahead of each walk.

Fishing derby and recreation day - Create a questionnaire to get people's ideas on conservation issues (i.e. town forest, trails, recreation, etc.) - No one volunteered for this yet.

Other/New Business

- Town Plan: When should we be prepared to make comments on the town plan? Only thing that has been changed so far is the energy section. At any point, we could bring updates on issues we are concerned with to the Planning Commission.
- Ellen shared a map of the National Historic Districts with the commissioners.
- Jeff Pelton had suggested three names for our last vacancy
- Northern Woodlands subscription: It has expired and we decided not to renew it.

Ellen moved to adjourn; Howard seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 8:52 PM.

Respectfully submitted:

Ellen Clattenburg, secretary/recorder

Next Meeting will be March 28. Location TBD.