

Weathersfield Conservation Commission

April 25, 2024, 6:45 pm
Martin Memorial Hall

Present: Ryan Gumbart, Cheryl Cox, Bruce Cox, Heather Shand, Marina Garland

Guest: Ernie Shand

Meeting called to order 6:53pm.

1. Agenda review

2. Cheryl moved we accept minutes. Bruce seconded. Unanimously passed.

3. Project List Review

- Waterway naming project
 - Ryan confirmed this is on the agenda for the May 13 Selectboard Meeting
- Town Forest Kiosk
 - See discussion further below
- Commissioner Packet
 - This was sent via email. Ryan asked that we confirm receipt and the ability to open and save. All confirmed yes.
- Town Forest
 - See discussion further below
- Town Walk Program
 - Tabled until next meeting when Ellen and Anna are in attendance.
- Tree Planting and Interpretive Sign
 - Marina confirmed that Ellen has sent in the proposal for the AVCC grant for the Salmond Covered Bridge area Interpretive Sign (tree planting is separate). Cheryl sent in our fees for AVCC to ensure we would be considered for the grant.
- Agricultural Products Guide
 - This project is yet to start. Ryan will reach out to the original authors to get feedback.
- Town Plan Review
 - In progress, requires additional time.
- Hydro Dam Relicensing
 - See discussion further below.

4. Town Forest

a) Kiosk

The following suggestions were shared for sign language and information.

- “Town” should precede “Forest”.
- Consider re-wording ‘jumping off point’ to State Park. Perhaps better to phrase “extend exploration of State Park.”
- Consider providing more information on Native American history in town.
- Add in more from Hannah’s updated Town Forest Plan.
- Heather reached out to UVLT about any suggested language about easements, rules, etc. Yet to hear back.

Ryan suggested looking into VOSS signs because he has seen them used in similar environments.

b) ARPA Funding (\$15K total) – Overview

- Funds need to be used by 2026 and there is flexibility in how funds can be used for recreational improvements.
- Ellen's quote for signs is approximately \$8K.
- Additional spending ideas for ARPA funds (\$7K):
 - Ryan will reach out to the ATA to help identify additional needs.
 - Resolve wetland crossing issues/violations (consultant? Stone? Culvert? Etc.) - to be investigated.
 - Ryan will put together a report for the Selectboard on additional spending.

c) Deer Exclosure – Approval

- Hannah Dallas, Southern Windsor County Forester has a 20x40 (?) deer exclosure available and has asked for permission to set it up in the Town Forest. She has UMASS students available to assist in set up. Hannah is suggesting the placement to be in lower side of power lines - set back from the trail. A primary purpose of the deer exclosure is to regenerate the White Oak. There was no opposition by commission members.

d) Other

- Town Forest Management Plan – Hannah Dallas is making progress. no specific updates at this time.

5. Town Plan Review – comment review

- Tabled until next meeting. Commission to review can review Bruce & Howard's comments/edits.

6. Hydro dam relicensing – comment review

- The deadline for submitting comment letters has been extended to May 22.
- Ryan thanked the members that have done a review already (Cheryl, Bruce and Marina).
- Marina reached out to Kathy Urffer, CT River Conservancy, for a better understanding of expectations for the letter.
 - Most letters are fairly original (not following the provided template).
 - Marina will share the FERC online library that has copies of letters from other towns.
 - Marina found it interesting that many letters speak to more river access.
- Bruce has started a letter based on the template. Bruce is interested in seeing how Hartland and Windsor have formed their letters.
- At Marina's suggestion, Commission members began a list of what is important to the town:
 - lessen erosion
 - river access
 - mitigate impact on prime agricultural lands
 - recreation (paddlers trail, camping sites)
 - better management for fishing
- Bruce and Marina to draft the letter. Ryan will consolidate and finalize.

- It is encouraged for Conservation members and others from the public to submit personal comment letters.

7. Budget Review

- Cheryl emailed Brandon in reference to the \$179 that was mistakenly allocated to 2023.
- Brandon is to provide confirmation that we can overspend by \$170 in 2024 for a simpler approach to correcting the error.
- Ryan offered a motion to reimburse Cheryl Cox for the expense of paying \$50 for AVCC annual membership dues. Marina seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously passed.

8. Other/new business

- None

9. Adjourn

- Meeting adjourned at 7:40pm

Respectfully submitted,

Heather Shand

Member, Weathersfield Conservation Commission

Next meeting:

May 23, 7pm

Location to be confirmed.