

Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes Tuesday, December 12, 2007

Attendance: Commission members Mike Pulsifer, Mike Duddy, John Herrick, John Planinsek and Dick Bauman; Town Planner Maureen O'Meara. Steve Ballou attended on behalf of the Land Trust. Jeff Walker, structural engineer and Steve Harding, town engineer, representing Oest Associates, also attended to discuss replacement of the Alewife Brook Bridge.

1. The meeting was called to order at 7:04 p.m.
2. November's meeting minutes were approved without change.
3. **Correspondence.** (Materials relating to the first three items were mailed to Commission members.
 - A Commission meeting schedule for 2008 was distributed.
 - Great Pond Land Acquisition. Copies of letters written to owners of certain properties on the north side of Great Pond were provided to Commission members. The letters asked if owners were interested in selling a piece of their property or an easement so that a portion of Great Pond trail routed across wetlands could be moved to drier ground. Neither of the three owners who have responded so far is interested in selling.

Rerouting the trail would have been an alternative to the boardwalk and stair construction projects described in the Commission's Bond Issue Priority List discussed below, under "Priority Setting."

- Commission members were provided with copies of letters and other material documenting the Town's acquisition of a controlling ownership of the Loveitt Heirs Parcel, which now exceeds 70 percent.
- Maureen informed the Commission that by her calculations, the amount expended for materials by the Town plus the value of volunteer labor is sufficient to warrant payment of the final Gull Crest Trail Grant reimbursement. Accordingly, she has submitted the required documentation and is awaiting a response.

The reimbursement amount is \$15,000 which, when received, will be deposited in the Town's general fund. Upon approval of the Manager, that amount could be transferred to the Greenbelt account. Currently, approximately \$6,000 remains in the Greenbelt

account, \$4,600 of which is committed to a previously approved Gull Crest trail improvement project.

- Maureen informed the Commission of a telephone conversation she had with Jay Cox who owns property bordering Winnick Woods. Mr. Cox called to express his concern that several Greenbelt signs were nailed to trees on his property. He was told to remove any such signs he wished on his property and that the Conservation Commission would be advised of the situation.

- 4. Priority Setting.** Prior to the meeting, members were provided with a revised draft list of projects and purchases the Commission was asked to propose for bond funding. This draft reflected ideas and decisions made at the November meeting as well as information Maureen was asked to obtain.

To accommodate the Oest engineers, item 3 on the priority list, the Alewife Brook bridge project was the first one discussed. Prior to the meeting, a materials list, cost estimate and engineers drawings documenting Oest's design had been sent to Commission members. The Oest engineers started with a brief presentation of the background work and considerations supporting their firm's design ideas. Their preparation included determining that a one page update to a previously approved permit is all that will be necessary to proceed with bridge construction across Alewife Brook.

Many questions were asked about soil conditions at the site, functionality and longevity of recommended materials and possible alternatives, assumptions on which cost estimates were based and possibilities for use of volunteer labor to hold down costs. Coverage of the topic concluded with the Commission generally accepting Oest's design but deciding to reduce their \$40,000 cost estimate by \$10,000 to reflect saving expected from use of volunteer labor for some tasks, including decking.

At this time the Commission engaged in a lengthy exchange of ideas and opinions about individual projects on the draft list as well as the advisability of recommending that so much bond funding be spent on Great Pond projects. The Commission decided that inclusion of all Great Pond projects was appropriate because Great Pond offers so much in the way of natural beauty, wildlife habitat and water access as well as providing a keystone connection between northern and southern Town trails. The Commission decided to retain all other projects well, although several cost estimates were changed.

The final list of projects to be proposed for bond funding, with projected costs, is as follows:

- Great Pond Boardwalk and stairway - \$70,000.
- Great Pond Pedestrian Access – \$15,000. The Commission is recommending that funds from the land acquisition account supplement this allocation, if necessary.
- Alewife Brook Bridge - \$30,000. Original estimate increased to reflect Oest cost data.
- Great Pond Boat Racks - \$2,000.
- Maintenance Equipment and Storage – \$13,250.
- Interpretive Signage - \$10,000.
- Gull Crest Trail Upgrades - \$5,000.

5. Ongoing Projects. Ongoing projects at Winnick Woods, Stonegate, the Loveitt Heirs parcel and Gull Crest were discussed. At Winnick Woods, Mike Duddy and Mike Pulsifer installed some of the framing lumber required to support a new potting shed roof. While discussing the potting shed, Maureen informed us that the potting shed sign and other trailhead signs have arrived. John Planinsek and volunteers he recruited constructed boardwalks at 5 places in the Loveitt Heirs Parcel. On the Outer Loop trail at Gull Crest, work on a wet section adjacent to the floating boardwalk is yet to be scheduled. The work cannot proceed until the ground freezes sufficiently to allow placement of telephone poles that were previously acquired for the purpose.

6. Shore Road Path Committee Appointment. In response to a recommendation by the Roadway Safety Working Group, the Town Council approved establishment of a committee to study the “potential for creating an off road path adjacent to Shore Road” between Fort William and the Town Center. A write-up of the Committee’s structure, responsibilities and related matters was distributed to Commission members prior to the meeting. According to the Council’s charge, one Conservation Commission member is to serve on the Committee and Dick volunteered to take on that responsibility. Dena was also mentioned as possibly being interested in serving. Maureen will find out if Dena wants to serve and, if so, she will be the Commission’s representative with Dick or John substituting as necessary.

7. Planning Board Meeting. No items of concern to the Commission are on the Planning Board’s December meeting agenda.

8. **Monthly Trail Walk.** No walk was scheduled for December. If possible, additional work will be done to repair the Winnick Woods potting shed.
9. The meeting was adjourned at 9.40. The next meeting is scheduled for January 8th.