

Conservation Commission Minutes

January 29, 2013

Present: Garvan Donegan, Richard Bauman, John Marchewka, Zach Matzkin, John Planinsek, Mitch Wacksman, Marti Blair, Town Planner Maureen O'Meara

Meeting called to order at 7:01 p.m.

1. Election of Officers: Chair, Garvan Donegan; Secretary, Marti Blair
2. Minutes of December 11, 2012 were reviewed and unanimously approved.
3. Correspondence. The meeting schedule for 2013 was reviewed and approved.
4. Snowmobiles on trails. There was discussion regarding the language of the various easements for the Great Pond Trail, some of which allow snowmobiles on the trails and some don't. There have been some conflicts between pedestrians and snowmobilers on Great Pond Trail. Snowmobiles on the new Outer Loop trail at Gullcrest may also cause some damage, and there is a concern that the planking and supports cannot support the weight of a heavy snowmobile. We could have signs at each end that close the trail during low snow conditions, and Skip Murray could put the signs up and down as conditions warrant. It was suggested that if we shut something down periodically, then there may be liability when it's not closed and perhaps should have been. A permanent sign could be installed that advises Caution.

There is concern about snowmobilers using the long boardwalk/bridge across Spurwink Marsh, because snowmobiles barely fit and scrape the bumpers. The Planner advised that snowmobiles were never intended to use that bridge. It was very difficult to get the permitting to build the boardwalk over the marsh. The whole system is supported by piers that are screwed into the peat of the marsh, and solid ground was never hit. It was not built for snowmobiles, it is only 4 feet wide. Snowmobiles could drive over the marsh, but not on the boardwalk. Some damage has been caused already. The Planner will speak with the Public Works Director and the Town Manager, and inform them that we anticipate closing the Spurwink Marsh boardwalk to snowmobiles.

5. Town Farm Trail surface stabilizing project. The Planner will check with Public Works, but they have probably not done anything on this project this winter.
6. Loveitt Woods access. Mr. Gordon does not want the trail to look down on his house, otherwise he is okay with it. The Planner is going to meet with Mrs. Krigman and walk the potential trail. We may offer vegetative screening, but it might be difficult to completely obscure the view of the Krigman house.
7. Aucocisco School. They are looking for a possible project for 5 students. They may come in with a plan for a Greenbelt trail near their school. It was suggested that the Canterbury project is located close to their school.
8. Winnick Woods Shrublands Management. Some trees have been taken out by Roland Pinnette. Some damage was done to the ground. Hopefully the cold weather froze the ground enough that the work can continue. Some neighbors have come in to see the Planner, but there

have not been any major complaints. The trees removed have been low in value. There is one apple tree on site that they are going to try to keep.

9. Greenbelt Trail description for website. The Planner presented a first draft of “Summary of Town Greenbelt System” which the Commission corrected slightly and endorsed.

10. Whaleback Trail. A small bridge will be built over the stream at the bottom of the trail, funded by NEMBA.

11. Canterbury Trail. There is a gentleman who is interested in a potential easement on the open space on his property, which goes back quite deep behind his home on Route 77. We are in the process of talking to the Canterbury folks to let them know that we are interested in activating the easement there. It was suggested that where our easement lands are very wet, we could consider a seasonal trail.

12. Greenbelt Plan Update – Vision and Goals. We are planning to review updates to the current 2001 plan section by section.

Goals: Replace “per” with “as reflected,” or “in accordance with.” The completion of the Greenbelt trail network from Fort Williams to Crescent Beach was questioned as the top expansion priority. This is the remaining priority from the original Greenbelt Plan. This will be a priority, but not the first one.

It was questioned whether the Shore Road pathway is considered part of the Greenbelt.

13. Expansion of membership of Conservation Commission. FOSP recommended that the membership of the Commission be increased to nine. The rationale was that if the town decided to purposefully evaluate and acquire new open space, the Commission would need extra personnel to carry out an effective open space acquisition program on top of everything else the Commission currently does.

Motion: To keep the membership of the Conservation Commission at 7 members.
Passed unanimously

14. Greenbelt Plan Update. Goals-Connectivity: The “Town Center Greenway” was mentioned by our new Council Liaison at a meeting, so that will be included under expansion priorities. Vision: Remove the reference to ¼ to ½ mile. Goals-Education: Add language regarding listening to residents and stakeholders. Instead of “Connectivity,” Goal One will be “Expansion and Connectivity.”

15. Meeting with CELT. The entire Board is not interested in meeting with the Conservation Commission, but the Stewardship Committee and Chris Franklin are. We would like to hear their proposal and ideas. After listening to them, then we could decide ourselves what the Commission is interested in. It would be helpful to have a proposal/agenda to review in advance of the meeting. A time of 6:30 on February 12, prior to the next Commission meeting, with pizza, was suggested.

16. Monthly trail walk. Meet at 4:30 at the trailhead at Whaleback on Tuesday, February 5.

Meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Next meeting: February 12, 2013.