

Conservation Commission Minutes **DRAFT**

May 8, 2012

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

Guest: Lucy Rhodes

Meeting called to order at 7:00 p.m.

1. Minutes of April 10, 2012 were reviewed and unanimously approved.
2. Correspondence. None.
3. Citizen Comments- Horse Trail bridges. Lucy Rhodes discussed the horse trail improvements. The trail has been flagged at Gull Crest. A small bridge, approximately 10 feet long, will be replaced at Great Pond, cost to be borne by the riders group. Wood will be used. It was asked what should be done with the old bridge materials, which are pressure-treated. If they can be moved to the end of Fenway, Public Works can be asked to move it to Whaleback for re-use.

The long bridge at Gull Crest would be a later project, probably in the fall. The bridge would be extended on the Fowler side and would need to come up a little further near the Malley's. The plan envisions removing the decking and installing heavy-duty slats. Because it is steep there, a design would need to be drawn up and submitted to the Conservation Commission. To stop vegetation from growing up through the screening, we could possibly install some fine mesh screen.

The need for bridge supports/posts on the Great Pond bridge was discussed, stringers will give some support but perhaps not enough for horses. Lucy dismounts and leads her horse over the bridge. There are railroad ties under there now, but they may only be at the end of the box. The design concept for Great Pond is ready but needs to be submitted to the Commission.

The horses are not using the other composite bridge at Great Pond (the Boy Scout bridge). It might be a good idea to have a No Horses sign there.

Between now and the fall, the Fowler bridge may need some limited repair, it's all but impassable now for about 50 feet. The idea was raised of using 4 by 4's run parallel to hold the gravel in place, on top of impermeable cloth. There are a dozen 8 or 10 feet long boards there now. Maureen will ask Public Works to put gravel in there. Horses are off that path for now.

The new trail around Gull Crest is working fine, according to feedback Lucy has received. Word has gone out to the barns that use the trail.

4. Cross Hill improvements. The trail day went very well, 20 people and 6 children came. Approximately 200 feet of bridging was installed and two areas were rock-armored. Mostly the bike crew came, but there seemed to be some neighbors. The trail is really nice now. The Conservation Commission bought a drill for the project, which Mitch Wacksman has.
5. Dyer Woods/Cliff Ave. We are planning to partner with Jim Tasse. The first step is to go in there and do some clean up and install signs. Garvan Donegan will get in touch with interested neighbor.
6. New England Cottontail habitat. The Master Plan says that a 15 acre chunk on the northwestern corner of Winnick Woods has been set aside for NEC. It is adjacent to a 10 acre parcel owned by Inland Fisheries & Wildlife, also for NEC habitat. On Thursday Maureen and John Planinsek met with a habitat renewal group, which has funding. All the big trees have to come out, leaving shrubs. Our forester, Mike Duddy, can plan the cut. Gary Donovan has a list of contractors to remove the trees, the contractors will count the value of the trees taken out against the cost of removal. This shrubland management (cutting) will take place in the winter, then the new shoots will provide good feed and habitat in the spring. The town will have to sign a Memorandum of Understanding. The Master Plan also says that Winnick Woods is an area where we will try to maintain a variety of habitat, compared to our other areas that are primarily wooded. We will need to leave a buffer by the neighbors and along the trails. The last time the area was checked, they found snowshoe hares. It should be good habitat for cottontails. There are cottontails in Gull Crest. It will provide shrubland landscape for other kinds of wildlife including birds and plant species. We could schedule a presentation for the Council.

In order to preserve the meadow on the other side of the trail, the Planner would like to ask Public Works to push back the tree line where it has encroached. The trees that would be removed are primarily birches.

7. Town Farm Trail cemetery. This is on hold. The stones were flagged. Between the stone wall and the house there is a very muddy 200 feet section, towards the mowed area, about 100 feet in past where the gravel is now. We will need to apply to the Planning Board for a permit, Maureen will prepare a homegrown application. In Gull Crest we got a state NRPA permit. In Cross Hill we are maintaining existing subdivision trails. This area is adjacent to the marsh, so we need Planning Board approval. We would like to replace the Gull Crest Nordic-Town Farm connector bridgeway.
8. Leighton Farms boundary planting is done. O'Donal's helped with picking out appropriate plantings, and Public Works did the planting. The total bill was around \$600, which came out of the Land Acquisition Fund. Apparently the neighbors have now stopped mowing and the zipline was gone.

9. Stonegate and Robinson connector are done, by John Planinsek. The back side of Stonegate formerly had boardwalks in sections, now they are more joined. Also on the back side of Robinson's, stones, signage, and boardwalk were installed.
10. Scott Dyer trail that connects at Village Crossings now has some huge tire track indents. Maureen will talk with Public Works. These may be ATV's. It was asked whether we have any No ATV signs.
11. Cottage Brook development off Spurwink. The development map shows trails. All of the green land is going to be deeded to the town, in phases.
12. Greenbelt trails mapping. Maureen would like to update the trails map, the Planner has some money for this project. This would be an extension of the GPS work Dale Brewer did before. The Committee marked off the Gull Crest area as needing new mapping. The Nordic trail can be delineated separately. The Dyer Woods/Cliff Ave. area will be GPS'ed.
13. Greenbelt Plan Update. The Plan is dated 2001, it is due for an update. We should look at the trail map and make suggestions for new connectors. The Town Manager agrees that it should be updated now. This item will be number one on our agenda next month. Commissioners should mark up the Open Space map with trail connector priorities, and review the text of the current plan.
14. Budget Update. The Commission has spent all its money for this budget year.
15. Planning Board review. Golden Ridge has submitted their request to pay a fee instead of granting an easement.
16. Monday, May 14 is the Council meeting to review and hopefully adopt the Open Space Management Plan.
17. Public Works part-time trails maintenance employee. The bush-whacking work done last year is a great foundation for this year, so there should be time available this summer for him to do extra work like spreading gravel and installing signs.
18. Trail Walk-Dyer Woods. Tuesday, May 22 at 5:15 p.m. Park in the Blueberry Ridge subdivision and meet at the intersection of Fernwood and Red Oak Drives. Walk through the arbor vitae to the trailhead.

Meeting adjourned at 9:12 p.m.

Next meeting: Tuesday, June 12, 2012.