

Conservation Committee Meeting  
March 20, 2018\*

\*The March 13, 2018 meeting was postponed to March 20th due to inclement weather.

Present: Jim Tasse, Marti Blair, Jeremy Gabrielson, Zach Matzkin, Robert Petitt,

Maureen O'Meara (staff)

1. Mr. Gabrielson called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m. Ms. O'Meara noted that she will be stepping out to attend a Town Council budget workshop and will then return.

2. Citizen comments.

Tom Meyers, 4 Seaview Ave, asked about the Conservation Committee timeline to discuss dogs. Mr. Gabrielson said that it would appear on the meeting agenda when it will be discussed. Due to other business, it may not be discussed until May.

3. Minutes. The February 13, 2018 minutes were approved 5-0.

4. Conversation with CELT Director. Cindy Krum, Cape Elizabeth Land Trust (CELT) Executive Director, gave a powerpoint presentation on the Robinson Woods Preserve expansion proposal. CELT Board member David Briman was also in attendance. Mr. Gabrielson explained that CC member Mitch Wacksman could not attend the rescheduled meeting due to a work conflict, but did send his comments in an email, which he requested be read at the meeting. Mr. Gabrielson read:

I'd first like to thank the Land Trust for their effort to continue preserving open space in our town, another great step forward. I support the idea of the town contributing to CELTs purchase as long as the town is legally granted rights as an active participation in managing the new space. Along with Mark, I had the privilege in working with CELT members on managing the Great Pond II / Glew acquisition. We met a handful of times to discuss appropriate property use, potential trails, and other management issues. We then worked together in the field to build a couple new trails and refresh a couple of existing trails. This worked very well and I believe should be a model for future Town / CELT partnerships. If the citizens of town are to financially contribute to the purchase of this property, a citizen's representative (Conservation Committee) should be included in its ongoing management.

Mr. Petitt asked if there is a sunset provision on the easements? Ms. Krum said the land is owned outright by CELT. The Maine Coast Heritage Trust (MCHT) holds a second layer. The Town Farm is an exception where CELT holds a 50-year easement. Mr. Tasse asked about the public access easement language and the opportunity to review it. Ms. Krum referenced the Glew easement and said the intent is to provide the town with an easement similar to Glew. She also would like to do an annual review for the Glew property (similar to what happens for a portion of Robinson Woods). CELT appreciates the management participation and help.

Ms. O'Meara noted that the Town Council has asked for the Conservation Committee's recommendation on the CELT funding request.

The committee asked about trails on the expansion parcel and were very excited about a second connection to the Shore Rd path. Ms. Krum said CELT would like to coordinate with the committee on trail locations, but that a trail loop may be limited by wetlands. The second connection, located on the southern side of the Olde Colony neighborhood, is more mowed than a trail. There are still lots of trees. CELT may want to add trees to the western side of the neighborhood. Ms. Krum said that there is habitat that may support New England cottontail and wading bird habitat. There are no identified endangered or threatened species. CELT would like to hold meetings with the Beach Bluff Terrace and Olde Colony Lane neighborhoods at some point. Parking will not be advertised on those streets and the committee agreed that parking is available at the preserve ends.

Mr. Tasse said that the parcel is beautiful and should be protected. He supports modeling the management of the new parcel on the Glew property process. He wants language that guarantees town involvement in management of the parcel.

Ms. Blair likes the property and wants to protect the little pond. She is happy the land to be protected is next to neighborhoods. She supports a universal access trail. She is concerned the funding request far exceeds the current balance in the town land acquisition account. Mr. Tasse asked how the town would raise the difference and Ms. O'Meara said that would be the Town Council's decision. In the past, funding has been packaged with capital improvements and bonded or raised with taxes.

Other committee members were also concerned with the amount and completely depleting the land acquisition account. All emphasized the need for clear language that guarantees the town meaningful management involvement.

Mr. Pettitt confirmed the purchase price is locked in. Ms. Krum said the purchase and sale agreement has a deadline of October 31, 2018, with an option to extend if significant funds are raised.

Mr. Tasse asked about stewardship. Ms. Krum said CELT operates a general stewardship fund, and segregates by property only if the donor requests it. Mr. Tasse said that the town may participate in specific stewardship needs if asked.

Ms. Blair would like to emphasize how this parcel is linked to the Greenbelt Plan.

Mr. Tasse said the recommendation can leave out specifics on amount or percentage of the funding. It is the Town Council's decision, but he wants taxpayer representation in the management of the property if tax dollars are used. He said it is a gorgeous property and an amazing addition to the town.

Mr. Pettitt confirmed that there will be title work done and title insurance. Ms. Krum said that Bob Danielson with Old Port Title will do that, title insurance will be had and an environmental assessment has been completed.

Mr. Gabrielson made a motion, seconded by Mr. Tasse, which was unanimously adopted:

The Conservation Committee recommends support for the Robinson Woods preserve extension subject to an easement held by the town similar to the town easement provided for the Glew property.

Ms. Krum said that no changes have been made to management at Robinson Woods (II) in the last year. Ms. Blair asked if there are any issues? Ms. Krum said the dog issue has settled down. There is 50% compliance with the dog leash rules. An intern last summer helped with signage and interpretive signs have been installed for vernal pools woodlands (?). There are challenges with storm clearance and winter moths. CELT has a volunteer storm clearance crew and they are a little behind due to the high volume of debris from storms. CELT partnered with the Fort Williams Park Foundation on banding some trees in Robinson Woods. Rack from the storms was noted on the parcel at Pond Cove and rocks were plowed off Shore Rd. It was noted this parcel is not included in the area where the town has an easement. Mr. Tasse noted a gigantic poison ivy bush at the entrance to the Pond Cove parcel and Ms. Krum said this could be handled by bringing in goats, which were used on CELT properties last year.

The committee asked about the stretch of trail on Robinson Woods II that was to be rerouted. Ms. Krum said the relocation is still under consideration. CELT obtained a DEP permit, but when she attended a Planning Board workshop, they wanted more information on the property boundary. Our steward said we should relocate the trail further from the wetland or erosion would occur again. This gets closer to neighbors, so we are working on boundary information. Ms. Krum said that CC members were welcome to come out again when the relocation is better located.

The committee asked about winter moth and expressed interest in hearing more from the tree warden. Mr. Matzkin said that 1' wide fly paper might work better than the narrower banding. Ms. O'Meara referenced a conversation with former tree warden Mike Duddy that partially effective treatments may be enough to save trees until a permanent treatment (estimated time frame 10 years) is available. Mr. Briman asked about the effectiveness of the parasitic fly, but it takes up to 10 years for that to be known.

5. Budget. No member of the Conservation Committee will be able to attend the March 21st budget workshop. Ms. O'Meara will attend.
6. Goals. The committee discussed goals to provide to the Town Council and reviewed a draft list. Ms. Blair is interested in creating a universal access trail, perhaps on the sewer line (Town Center Trail). Mr. Petitt suggested that Kindred/The Landing may be a willing contributor. Mr. Tasse suggested that a stone dust surface rather than paving can be considered universal access if properly constructed.

The committee voted unanimously to approve the following goals in order of priority:

1. Pollack Brook bridge and trail
  2. Greenbelt Trail improvements
  3. Comprehensive Plan input
  4. Universal access trail
  5. Dogs
7. Comprehensive Plan. Ms. O'Meara explained that the Open Space and Recreation chapter will be reviewed by the Comprehensive Plan Committee in the next few months, and the Conservation Committee may want to provide input. The committee reviewed the chapter in the 2007 plan and made comments.

The committee agreed that they would like to be involved and noted where updates are needed. They did not see a reason to include the full list of town owned land in the chapter, preferring to reference the Greenbelt and Open Space Management Plan. They would like the goals to include increasing current open space by 10%. This will be discussed more in future meetings.

8. Greenbelt implementation projects. The committee agreed to delay discussion of most items due to the hour, but reviewed the proposal for rehabilitation of the Winnick Woods trails. Mr. Tasse said it now appears that instead of phasing improvements, most of the Winnick trails can be rehabilitated for the same cost, which would be donated to the town. The trails would then be of a quality suitable for a jogging stroller. At the southern end of Winnick Woods, Mr. Tasse proposed a new connection to the parallel trail, creating a loop completely on town property, subject to avoiding wetlands. A new trail would also be added at the treeline of the meadow. No work is proposed in the shrubland habitat area. The committee agreed to this proposal. The intent is to do the work in June. Ms. O'Meara will provide a wetland map, will provide the abutting land owner an update, and will ask for 2 volunteers to help the last 2 weeks in June. During the work, trails will be closed.
9. Next meeting. The committee will discuss seasonal trail closures, including closing trails to all users. Other items include a conversation with Kurt Shoener, Two Lights State Park, comprehensive plan input and the Pollack Brook bridge project.
10. No members of the public were present. The meeting adjourned at 9:20 p.m.