

Conservation Committee Meeting Minutes  
7:00 p.m. October 9, 2018

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

Maureen O'Meara, staff

1. Mr. Gabrielson opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m. The minutes were approved (4-0). No members of the public wished to speak about items not on the agenda.
2. Mr. Gabrielson moved, by consensus, the General Trail Management item to the beginning of the agenda due to members of the public who were in attendance for those items.
3. Under General Trail management, Mr. Gabrielson explained that Eagle Scout candidate Tim Gilda will be shifting his project to the Loveitt Woods boardwalk, because necessary permits have been obtained. Mr. Gabrielson exchanged emails with Troop leader A. J. Dinno and also met with Tim at Loveitt Woods last weekend. Tim is interested in the project and will probably attend the November meeting. He will probably do the work in the Spring. There was a question about adding a board to the 2' x 10' section.
4. Ms. O'Meara updated the committee on the Tiger Lily Ln greenbelt access. She met with contractor Skip Murray and he will be doing the ramp adjustments. A neighbor is concerned with the location of new trail access that will extend from the ramp to the existing trail. For this reason, the Conservation Committee agreed to retain a surveyor to meet with a committee representative and jointly flag the trail so that no inadvertent encroachment on private property will occur.
5. Ms. O'Meara updated the committee on the Pollack Brook bridge and boardwalk project. Bids for the bridge installation have been posted and are due to be opened October 18th. Permitting for the trail and boardwalk will be completed soon, after which installing the trail will need to occur.
6. Mr. Gabrielson opened up public comment.

Tony Owens, 19 Sea View Rd, would like to talk about management of the Town Farm, specifically mowing further from the cattail area/sensitive fern to enhance the habitat for monarch butterflies. He asked Public

Works Director Robert Malley to delay mowing, which he did. Director Malley recommends that the Conservation Committee be tasked with establishing maintenance policies for town open spaces.

Mr. Gabrielson felt that a fall mowing would now be acceptable, with perhaps a bit less mowing into the swale.

Mr. Tasse asked if there are any invasive plants, in which case mowing might keep them in check? Mr. Owens said he has not seen invasives.

Mr. Gabrielson said the larger question is how to manage grasslands. He recommends that Bob hold off mowing the sensitive fern area. Ms. O'Meara relayed that, in response to Director Malley's concern that he not set policy, that the mowing continue as it has until the CC can provide input.

Mr. Gabrielson said that mowing after July 15th avoids conflicts with birds, but if we push it more for monarchs, there may be unknown consequences. There was a concern that alders would get established if we don't continue mowing. The town farm is an important, year-round recreation area.

In response to a question on the amount of buffer recommended, Mr. Owens recommended a 20' -30' wide buffer on the western side; on the pathway flowage to the marsh, 10' to give the cattail marsh more room. It was noted that cattails may be considered invasives.

Ms. Blair asked where in the CC authorization is this management responsibility incorporated? The management plan does not describe managing the town farm for habitat. Is that adequate?

The committee agreed to manage proactively and make interim recommendations for now and look a management plan more deeply this winter, including evaluating options.

The committee adopted a motion, 6-0, to ask Director Malley to increase the buffer as described as part of the fall mowing.

7. The committee discussed improvements to Cliff House Beach. Ms. O'Meara reported that the granite slab has been placed at the bottom of the steps, creating a reasonable transition between the stairs and the beach. It will be necessary to monitor that it stays in place. It is secured

with pins and mortar. The interim sign has also been installed by Public Works.

Ms. Blair mentioned how worn the existing bench is and if a donation of a bench is appropriate. Ms. O'Meara explained that the town will be replacing the bench with the same style bench installed at Ft Williams.

Mr. Gabrielson said that the committee will begin discussion of management of Cliff House Beach at next month's meeting. He opened the meeting to public comment.

Tony Owens, 19 Sea View Ave - The bench has a long history and was installed by resident Bill Orcutt.

Ms. O'Meara expanded the description of the bench, the preference for maintenance purposes of the town to replace the bench, and plans for the bench to be a memorial to Mr. Orcutt, all of which was provided by Public Works Director Bob Malley.

Chris Campbell, 598 Shore Rd - All beach goers pass by his house. The number of people and cars are intrusive, unsafe and he supports continuing forward with management policies.

Mr. Tasse noted that he has also observed good sized crowds at the beach, but does not think the new steps have increased the crowds. There was general agreement the new stairs have had no impact on existing management concerns.

Tom Mikulka, 4 Mountainview Rd - He thinks the stair project went well. The ramp onto the stairs oddly intersects the access path, but overall is an improvement. He and other neighbors are mowing the grass and are ok with continuing this maintenance for now.

The committee agreed that mowing by the neighborhood was similar to an informal "adopt the park" program and supports this. The town will add trimming along the stairs to the annual trail maintenance.

Tony Owens - The stairs are ok, now the upper landing needs to be addressed.

Ms. Blair said that last September, she was struck by the condition of the old railing and the new railing works very well.

Mr. Gabrielson confirmed that a broader conversation about management of Cliff House Beach will be on the November meeting agenda.

8. Dog Ordinance. Ms. O'Meara provided a summary of the Town Council referral and her recommendations for framing the task. (See memo to Conservation Committee)

The committee discussed the scope of the review. The committee generally agreed that a review of the entire ordinance with a focus on Sec. 7-1-7, municipal property is their preference, with the understanding that a review does not mean that each section would be changed.

The committee also discussed changing Sec. 7-1-7 to a category of regulation approach that promotes better coordination of the management of town land and enforcement. The town's ability to quickly address management issues would be improved if the Town Council is willing to delegate some authority. The committee agreed that it was important to get Town Council input before proceeding further.

Mr. Gabrielson opened the meeting to public comment.

Chris Tullmann, 47 Stonybrook Rd - He questioned if the town Dog Ordinance applies to CELT land?

Ms. O'Meara said the ordinance applies to the entire town, but Sec. 7-1-7 specifically regulates municipal property.

Chris Campbell, 598 Shore Rd- On Cliff House Beach, dogs on the beach is a problem, even when they are on leash. He has observed lots of interference by dogs in visitors' enjoyment of the beach. He supports limiting dogs on the beach to certain hours, modelling the Willard Beach system.

Sheila Wellehan, 24 Rocky Hill Rd - She is the coordinator of the Cape Dog Owners group. She also agrees that dogs shouldn't be on Cliff House Beach, and supports adopting the Willard Beach rules. She submitted an email with specific suggestions, including support for the Management of Open Space and Greenbelt Plan policy regarding dog waste disposal and voice control. Control should be emphasized and management should be targeted to the majority of users, not outliers.

Tom Mikulka, 4 Mountainview Rd - He has coached soccer at Fort Williams for many years and found lots of dog waste. He has lived at Mountainview since 2002 and is a dog owner. He wants dog rules specific to the beach that allow early am access, no pm access, seasonal. He is also concerned with traffic.

Ms. O'Meara asked if he has noticed a change this summer (the rules at Fort Williams Park were changed in the spring) and he said he is no longer a coach.

Suzanne McGinn, 1180 Shore Rd - She is a Fort Williams Park Committee member. She suggests the town designate property as a dog park, using existing town land or purchase new land. In Fort Williams Park, there was a dog bite last summer. There are 1 million visitors and not great compliance within the leashed dog area.

Sheila Wellehan, 24 Rocky Hill Rd - She questioned the dog park as a different experience from natural areas. Mrs. McGinn noted that Thomaston has a dog park.

Tony Owen, 19 Sea View Ave - Every day, 20-40 dogs walk on his property on the way to Cliff House Beach. It is a small beach. He supports early morning off-leash hours and no off-leash for the rest of the day.

Suzanne McGinn, 1180 Shore Rd - She would like to address the dog waste issue by making more dog waste bags available, such as at Great Pond.

Public comment was closed. Ms. O'Meara noted that Ms. Wellehan has called her with specific suggestions and she encouraged Ms. Wellehan to compile them into an email, which was sent.

The committee discussed general support for option 3, a review of the complete Dog Ordinance with a focus on Sec. 7-1-7, and modernize and update as needed the remainder of the ordinance.

The committee discussed the category system to determine dog rules by open space property. Ms. Blair suggested the ordinance designate a default category for open space not on the list.

Mr. Tasse asked who would manage the open space list and assigned dog category? We want a nimble process and need to designate if it is the

Town Council, town manager or other authority. The committee noted that Riverside Cemetery should be added.

Mr. Matzkin noted it will be important to keep the list current or this approach will be too complex.

Mr. Wacksman supports reviewing the entire ordinance, using the categorized system and clarifying management authority. Perhaps the town manager can be the authority on a temporary basis if the town council does not delegate authority.

Sheila Wellehan commented that the category approach will be a challenge for users to understand and that simple signs should be posted at town open spaces.

The committee voted 6-0 to seek direction from the Town Council on a recommendation (1) to review the entire Dog Ordinance with a focus on Sec. 7-1-7 and modernize and update the remainder of the ordinance, (2) to use a category of enforcement approach, and (3) gauge comfort level with delegation to management authorities.

9. Ms. O'Meara said the comprehensive plan process is wrapping up and the committee may want to comment on the Open Space chapter recommendations, as well as attend the October 30th public forum.

Chris Tullmann commented that the town should be careful about extending public sewer because it could make small lots buildable.

10. Ms. O'Meara noted that the town is accepting applications for a spot on the Conservation Committee and members who know any good candidates should encourage them to apply.
11. The committee considered a monthly trail walk. No trail walk was scheduled but Mr. Gabrielson invited Mr. Tullmann to send him dates to walk Cross Hill or Robinson Woods.
12. Ms. Blair asked about the committee getting involved in habitat restoration/preservation. Examples include the new england cottontail habitat work done, the monarch discussion, perhaps tidal flow restrictions and aquatic connectivity.
13. Mr. Tasse noted there is a lot of interest in more trail rehab work. It takes time to queue up those projects and he suggests the committee start

discussions in November/December. The work in Winnick Woods has been well received and perhaps we can look at Gull Crest. He suggested a goal of having a trail of this level of quality around the town. He noted that there has been both positive and negative feedback.

Suzanne McGinn asked what is the biking policy for walkers and bikers on the trail. Mr. Tasse said the town should use best practices and that all users, including bikers, be courteous of other trail users. If an aggressive bikers issue develops, we can use signage to address it, similar to Yarmouth.

14. For the November meeting, the committee agreed to include:

- Pollack Brook bridge and boardwalk
- Cliff House Beach Management
- Dog Ordinance (if feedback from the Town Council is received)
- CELT easement monitoring

Mr. Gabrielson said that if he schedules a site visit on CELT easement monitoring, he will let all know in case someone wants to attend. Mr. Tasse will try to meet onsite before October 24th to flag the Tiger Lily trail.

15. The committee voted 6-0 to adjourn at 9:20.