

Town of Jackson
Conservation Commission Minutes
Regular Meeting - February 5, 2024 - 5:30PM
(Unofficial Until Approved)

Present: Pam Smillie, Ben Halcyon, Richard Bennett, Mike Dufilho, Brian Byrne and Tom Seidel.

Attendees: Hank Benesh

The meeting was called to order.

Approval of Minutes:

January 2024 Meeting Minutes

Ken made a motion to approve the meeting minutes as written, seconded by Pam. All approved.

Prospect Farm:

Ken presented the new signs fabricated by Jackson Ski Touring to be used at the new parking area and also the resident parking at Jackson Falls. He spoke with Gary Allen and the Forest Service about what would be needed to prepare the new parking area for use in the spring and should be able to source any additional fill needed from the Forest Service pit on the Bog Brook logging road.

Jackson Falls:

Emily Benson sent an email follow up from the January meeting, FEMA has granted the state an extension for filing emergency claims until March 15.

Temporary Pathway Closure

The Select Board following the commissions recommendation to close the pathways to foot traffic. Ken put together an estimated cost of \$10,300 for a contractor to supply and spread wood chips, provide erosion control, rebuild the fern revegetation plots, and to supply and install fencing to define pathways in order to have trails open as soon as possible in the spring. There was a discussion about how this would be funded from the budget and then eventually reimbursed from the FEMA funds. Ken brought up at the Select Board meeting that this will likely be an ongoing cost and should be added to the budget as annual maintenance. Ken reviewed the hydrologists report from 2013 which contained general analysis but not a level of detail that would help form a new management plan. One suggestion was to hardscape areas that receive the most impact but that may be far beyond what is desired in terms of development at the falls. Mike suggested it would be a good time for a consultant to reassess the site since it has been more than ten years and to look at our options for hardening the river bank, building buffers, and rerouting footpaths and establishing better paths onto the slabs in light of current

storm activity. It was estimated that a consultant would cost around \$10,000-\$15,000 and the last time was paid out of the current use fund. Dick wanted to use this as an opportunity to formalize the goals and objectives of the Conservation Commission and to consider the creation of a Parks and Recreation Department or position for the town to separate the day to day managing of town properties from the State mandated duties of the Conservation Commission and the other educational goals of the Commission. (Discussion continued in new business)

Gray's Inn:

Nothing to Report

Community Garden:

Nothing to Report

Wildcat River:

Ben has reached out to the VRAP coordinator for updated planning materials but has not heard back from him.

Conservation Easements:

Nothing to Report

Wetlands:

Nothing to Report

Dundee Community Forest:

There will be a meeting of the management board on March 20

New Business:

Continued from Jackson Falls discussion; Dick wanted the commission to look for ways to distribute information and resources to residents on Best Management Practices for controlling run off and promoting water quality and controlling invasive species. Mike had an idea on how to report on topics we discuss and get information out that links residents with online resources either through the minutes or some other newsletter. Ben said the NHACC suggested using discussions of wildlife and seasonal change as way to build connection with the community. Pam pointed out the state has some outreach topics with specialists in relevant fields. Ken thought some objectives such as invasive plant control are beyond the ability of the commission to address alone and would require a warrant article and funding to be effective. Mike wanted the commission to consider the keys things we want to address and what are achievable goals and to build out a budget plan for next year so we can be more proactive with our time. Ken will continue working on the Jackson Falls Management Plan which will help define needs and costs and long term strategy.

Public Comment:

There were no additional comments.

Brian made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Tom Seconded. All approved.

Respectfully submitted by Ben Halcyon

To view the full video recording of this meeting visit www.jacksonflicks.com/Jackson