

Conservation Commission Minutes
September 10, 2018
5:30 PM, Town Office

Members present: Bill, Tom, Mike, Pam, Margaret
Hank Benesh filmed. Susan Ross-Parent and Margaret Granciano took notes.
Members of the public present: Fred Tompkins
Selectmen: Bob Thompson

Review Minutes, August - change wording regarding mention of Eagle Mountain Golf Course
Minutes accepted as amended.

Prospect Farm

-knotweed at old stump dump - flowering now, 2 small clumps. Who will pull this, tarp dry it, and take to dump? Mike recently went to invasive workshop where the aggressive removal was encouraged when the clumps are small. Bob Thompson suggested the mechanical removal best practices methods the town was counseled to use over the last few years: cut to 1 inch, cover with thick plastic to suffocate. Burn what was cut. Repeat. Suggestions for what to plant to compete with cut knot weed: to be researched. Woodchips would work for mulch under the plastic.

Work day for CC at Prospect Farm: Sept. 22 at 2 PM - to adjust via email. Members - RSVP! Burn permit - Tom will request.

Mowing: Mark, will you please contact Dean Davis to mow at Prospect Farm?

Motion approved to allocate funds for mowing.

Jackson Falls: go over list of recommendations and feedback from select board, road agent, and JXN police: going through the list based on responses from Road Agent and others:
Background support for list: Wild and Scenic Rivers, erosion plan, previous plans for Falls

-parking proposal -

Feedback: Tell the story of conservation, ask for advice regarding safety from other offices in town.

Bill asks Bob T to clarify CC's role in safety issues in the areas of its responsibility. Bob T said that there was evidence needed to prove unsafe situations at the Falls (compared to data collected for parking at Double Head Trail Head.) Data was collected at the trailhead but specific situations at the Falls were not given.

Backing out of the parking area into road after turn and fast-moving traffic is dangerous and parallel parking is considered safest.

Tom suggests going over the 7 recommendations and that CC is looking for guidance and feedback from selectboard before CC moves on with recommendations.

Bob T said that, for the most part, the selectmen did not look at the recommendations to approve or disapprove at this time.

Going over the recommendations from a purely conservation point of view:

Eliminate parallel parking - need to explain reasoning of soil compaction, erosion, etc.

Consult Greg Howard report and perhaps ask him back to examine the area at the distance of 5 years since his last look at the condition of the soil in that parking area. Tom mentions town engineer suggested Sean Sweeney of a hydrologist to look at soil loss at the top and bottom of bank from handicapped parking through parallel parking area. Motion approved to hire hydrologist and soil scientist to update the data on the conditions that prevail. Also: to include the road agent to guide the clean up of the riprap at the head of that section.

Bill suggests getting more input to move it forward beyond the conservation perspective whether CC will pursue regulations and parking changes with the DOT.

Tom: does not want to spend money to propose a solution that the town does not want.

Data, like the Howard Report, presented in professional manner with all the credentials presenting to the select board will be needed along with state DOT - expects weighing in will be the best route to have the recommendations considered seriously.

Process to follow through with DOT? Bob will be meeting with Lancaster office of state DOT soon on another project, he will ask them at that time for the best protocol for CC to work with DOT.

Bill comments that he lives across the street from the Falls. He notes that the pull in parking area is not deep enough to accommodate the longest trucks, bike racks, etc. In addition, there are people standing in the road, unaware that it is a traveled road.

Pam comments that it is difficult and unsafe to walk past the head in parking area without walking in the road.

Margaret and Tom - photos would help - take to selectmen -

Member of public - biking very dangerous - could they back in? Angled parking?

Tom mentions that the state has regs for backing onto or off state highway. It's probably not the CC's purview to hire a safety engineer but suggests gathering data and evidence of safety concerns.

To review - what was the Green Hill Rd issue? Speed limit was questioned - too fast. There is a certain protocol and expense to gather the data to request an adjustment/lowering of speed limit for safety reasons.

Tom: suggests that CC will drop the speed limit and safety issues at the Falls and ask the select board to review.

#6 Signs to indicate overflow parking at the trail head for JSTF. Fire pond signage will be/was updated to indicate no parking AT ALL at fire pond. Mike suggests: signage and to let hotels know to inform their guests...overflow signs could come down in the winter.

Kiosk: How to use the Falls correctly, history, map for parking areas. Small signs have been fine. Front country parks and areas all have kiosks - expected by the public. Add parking suggestions in the brochure that's available - Margaret will do.

Drop-off zones become more important and that needs DOT buy-in. Will this increase the number of visitors? Is there a carrying capacity to the Falls? (specific question for

hydrologist and soil scientist.)

Alternate parking areas:

Valley Cross Rd

Uphill parking at Old Town Office/historical society

Public parking by Library

Lower Falls parking - not public. The Wentworth uses the lower lawn for weddings. It's a public right of way but so far hasn't been a conflict for the weddings. Margaret will check in with Wentworth to see where they're at because we noticed the public way sign has been removed.

Residents only parking at Falls: board is split.

Mike expressed that he is not in favor of resident only parking.

Bill acknowledged that this is a point of contention among board members. But his concern is that town residents are excluded from using their own town's park on hot busy summer days.

The board concluded that residents only parking is outside our jurisdiction and those town residents who feel strongly about the issue should take it to the selectboard.

Pam wondered if concerned residents had been directed to us by the selectboard after they had already gone there first?

Our selectboard representative said that when a town resident brought this issue before the board during public comments, he/she was told that they should return to the next meeting by getting on the agenda and presenting a proposal with possible ideas for management. If resident only parking at the falls is established, how would it be enforced? Resident stickers similar to the dump system? Advanced permitting? If concerned residents bring the issue of residents only parking before the selectboard with concrete ideas, they would happily consider it.

Mike thanked Chief Perley and our road agent for taking the time to review our Jackson Falls recommendations and give us feedback. We are not experts on many things, and sincerely appreciate their feedback. Thank you!

Gray's Inn

No new developments to report.

Conservation Easements

It's time to monitor again. Last week Tom sent out the log-in and password so that all members can fill out their online reports. Pam reminded Tom that we need to send letters to the landowners and Tom will ask the Julies to do this. Thank goodness for the Julies!

New Business

We have a new wetlands permit for a property on Maple Bush Rd. Margaret made a motion to authorize the wetlands committee to approve the permit after review. All were in favor.

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 7:00pm. All in favor!

Gray's Inn
Conservation Easements
-annual monitoring
New Business
Public Comment

As always, the public is encouraged to attend and share their vision for the use of Jackson town properties and other conservation priorities. Our meetings are typically at 5:30 PM at the town office building on the first Monday of each month.