

**Conservation Committee Meeting Minutes
Cape Elizabeth Town Hall
7:00 p.m., Tuesday, December 13, 2022**

Present: Matt Craig, Acting Chair, Emily Helliesen Day, Chris De Vries, Stacey Dietsch, Bruce Moore, Richard Sullivan.

Staff: Maureen O'Meara, Town Planner

1. Call to Order. Chair Craig called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.
2. Citizen comments. No citizens wished to speak at this time.
3. Minutes. The minutes of the November 8, 2022 meeting were amended to correct the attendance list and then approved 5-0-1(Day abstain).
4. Planning Board review. The committee heard a presentation from Bob Metcalf, Mitchell & Associates, on behalf of Roots Academy, regarding a site plan amendment for the first floor of 2 Davis Point Lane to change the use from office to school, plus a Resource Protection Permit to install a nature walk in the RP1 Buffer.

Chair Craig asked if there was any specific direction from the Planning Board to the Conservation Committee? Ms. O'Meara reviewed the process to date, a Planning Board workshop on December 6th when the Planning Board asked about comments from the committee. She explained that once the applicant submits a formal application, it would be reviewed by the committee and comments sent to the Planning Board in advance of the Planning Board meeting.

Jaclyn Gallo, Roots Academy director, explained that the school is currently housed with Ledgemere Day Care and offers instruction for K-3. They have a fenced wooded area now that is incorporated into instruction and want the nature path to continue environmental based education.

Ms. Dietsch asked how the invasive plants which will be removed to create the nature path will be disposed of? Mr. De Vries asked about the benefit of mowing to control invasives. Ms. O'Meara reviewed the priority guidelines in the newly adopted Invasives policy.

Mr. Moore asked if boardwalks would be installed and Ms. Gallo said no as the path is not located in a wetland, but rather a buffer.

Mr. DeVries asked about the long-term ideal for invasives? Ms. Gallo said she would like to eventually remove more invasives and restore with native plants. She has a \$40,000

grant to create outdoor space and invasives removal would need to be phased, subject to costs.

Chair Craig thanked them for the preliminary presentation.

5. Greenbelt Management.

Vigorous Tenderness Event. Sarah Shmitt represented Vigorous Tenderness, which performs outdoor concerts during the solstice and equinox, and is requesting permission to hold a concert on December 21st at Gull Crest. There are 6 ensembles and quiet amplification will only be at the voice and guitar performance. The performance is from 5:30 pm to 7:00 pm and people can wander to the performance sites on the trails. This will be their 13th concert. There is no trash and they will remove the piano remnants from the piano that will be burned. A quiet generator may be used between sites 6 and 7. They tend to have less than 100 attendees, donations only, and the music performed is by underrepresented composers, democratizing classical music.

Chair Craig asked about advertising. Ms. Shmitt said they will use social media, MPBN, community calendars, and really need to confirm a site so they can get the word out. Staff will submit event info for posting to the town website.

Mr. DeVries asked how the locations at Gull Crest were chosen. Ms. Shmitt walked Gull Crest, in the rain, and chose sites that allow attendees to re-engage with the landscape, in a remarkable setting and out of the wind, both for the musicians and attendees.

Ms. Dietsch asked about lights. Ms. Shmitt said they would use mostly white Christmas tree type lights and string them along the trail to provide lighting for attendees.

Mr. Craig asked if they are a 501 (c) (3)? They are not, but can provide insurance with support from the Space Gallery.

Mr. Sullivan asked if they include a violin or cello, which they do not in winter.

Mr. DeVries has a concern that people will not be able to see potential icy spots on the trails.

Mr. Craig is in favor of the event, but noted that allowing a piano to be set on fire may set a precedent. Ms. Shmitt said that a fire master is assigned to the piano. Ms. O'Meara noted that the committee gave the Boy Scouts permission to hold their jamboree at the site and they had campfires.

Ms. Day asked how long it takes to burn the piano? Ms. Shmitt said that it smolders for a while and no accelerant is used.

Mr. Craig noted that the ice rink is underway. Ms. O’Meara has contacted them about sharing the area and they are supportive and also considering dimming the ice rink lights during the performance. The committee discussed lighting from the Public Works facility and Ms. O’Meara will request that those lights be dimmed.

Ms. Dietsch made a motion, seconded by Mr. Moore, to approve the event and it passed 6-0.

Signage at Winnick Woods/Cross Hill. Ms. O’Meara reported that she and Mr. Moore walked the trails just before Thanksgiving, installing signage, and learned that the current mapping is not correct. She has contacted Dale Brewer with Statewide Surveys to collect GPS data of the trail areas that are not mapped correctly and he will try to get that done this month. Once the trail map is updated, signage installation will resume.

Gull Crest mapping. The data collected on new trails will also be used to update the trails map.

Boat Rack. Ms. O’Meara is pleased to report that the Sprague Corporation has granted permission to install a 3rd boat rack. The committee agreed to use funds in the greenbelt trails account to pay for rack construction. Due to the large demand for boat rack slots, the committee agreed to add all slots to the lottery.

Other trail work. Ms. O’Meara received a report that town owned open space had been altered in the Aster Lane area. She visited the site and found that the neighbors, who are enthusiastic supporters/volunteers of the greenbelt trail system, had cleared a trail similar to what the committee has installed in other parts of town. Permission for the volunteers to install the trail should have obtained from the committee prior to the installation. An after-the-fact request will be made to the committee at the January, 2023 meeting.

Gazette. The committee would like pictures from the Vigorous Tenderness concert in the gazette, as well as a reminder about respecting trails groomed by Cape Nordic, and asking folks to avoid plowing snow into greenbelt trail heads when they can.

6. Budget. Ms. O’Meara reported that department budgets are due January 20th so the committee recommendation must be done by the January meeting. There is \$52,000 in the greenbelt trails account at this time. A shortage of labor has hampered the committee’s efforts to make trail improvements.

Ms. Day would like to consider upgrading an existing trail to a machine built trail, similar to the meadow trail at Winnick Woods. The committee discussed how the machine built trails create a much improved trail surface for biking and walking. Ms. O’Meara will contact Jeremy Nellis and Maine Trail builders for cost information. The committee discussed trails that might be good candidates for the improvement, specifically trails in

Winnick Woods and Stonegate. We should reach out to NEMBA for recommendations for locations.

Mr. DeVries noted that the recently rebuilt Gull Crest trail is suffering from high water /potential blockage. The committee discussed having someone investigate a possible wildlife cause. The committee agreed to hire a wildlife biologist to survey the area north of the new boardwalk to look for a source of the rising waters.

Mr. De Vries noted that there is potential for more volunteers from Bissell Bros Brewing. With equipment, 5-10 people can build a 200' long boardwalk. Can the committee obtain an impact driver and electric chain saw to support volunteer work? The committee agreed to purchase equipment.

7. Priority setting. The committee reviewed the high and medium priority projects identified in the FB Environmental study located at Cross Hill/Winnick Woods, Gull Crest, and Stonegate (all permitting has been obtained for these sites). The committee agreed that the following projects are the priorities for work: 1-87, 1-90, 1-91, 1-99, 2-19, 2-32, 2-40. (2-35 is done). Staff will package these projects and reach out to Portland Trails and others to construct boardwalks. Projects are also identified for when volunteers contact the committee.
8. Next meeting. The next meeting will be held January 10th and will include election of officers, budget, and Planning Board review. The meeting ended at 9:08 p.m.