

Conservation Committee Meeting Minutes  
7:00 p.m., Tuesday, September 9, 2020

As a result of the COVID-19 virus, the Conservation Committee conducted the meeting via Zoom remote access as provided by Maine law. Zoom allowed all Conservation Committee members and members of the public to hear all discussion and hear votes, which were taken by roll call, as required by law.

Present: Jim Tasse, Chair, Matt Craig, Emily Helliesen Day, Christophe-Heijn De Vries, Corinne Ketcham, Mitch Wacksman

Bruce Moore was unable to join the meeting due to technical problems.

Maureen O'Meara, Town Planner

1. Public Comment.

Christopher Campbell, 498 Shore Rd - He appreciates the Conservation Committee delay to discuss the Cliff House Beach Management review so the neighborhood can collect data from the neighborhood. Does the Conservation Committee have any suggestions for questions?

Ms. Day would like to hear proposed solutions, seconded by the members of the committee.

2. Mr. Tasse called the meeting to order and the minutes of the August 11, 2020 meeting were approved 6 - 0.

3. CELT Coordination.

CTT Report: Philip Mathieu, CELT Stewardship Coordinator, asked to start with the CTT Trail report and Lila Gaudrault.

Lila Gaudrault - She is a CEHS senior and was a CELT intern. Her report reviews the Cross Town Trail (CTT) and recommends improved signage. Her report is a trail guide.

Ms. Ketcham complimented the report.

Mr. Wacksman admired the pictures and historical portions. He would like to tweak the report to note that the CTT trail is 8 miles, with 4 miles on town open space, 1 mile on town roads and 3 miles on CELT open space. The report should reflect the CELT/Town partnership. Could this be added to the back of the report? CELT agreed and Ms. O'Meara will provide suggested additions to Mr. Matthieu.

All committee members agreed the report was well done.

Robinson Woods town easements: Mr. Matthieu introduced this item as a discussion about CELT's survey to review the Robinson Woods dog policy. He shared the results.

Suzanne McGinn, representing CELT, provided background that CELT established the current dog leash rules in 2016 after experience with dog bites and dog waste. CELT's education programs were compromised by the extent of dog waste and "safe and enjoyable access for users" easement provisions were compromised by out of control dogs. CELT monitoring indicated 60% leash compliance and improvement in the amount of dog waste. The preserve is now 197 acres and the off-leash dog hours do not align, which is confusing. CELT wants to simplify the rules to 1 off-leash time each day. Lucy Tabb, Maine Coast Heritage Trust Intern, prepared the online survey.

The survey had 366 responses and the responses were reviewed. Mr. Wacksman asked if you asked survey responders about the option of adopting the same dog policy as on town open space? Mrs. McGinn said no. CELT wants its land to be safe for all and folks are not using the property because of dogs. Young families and older folks are frightened by the dogs that approach them out of control.

Mr. Tasse noted that 75% of survey respondents are dog owners. What role does the Conservation Committee have?

Mrs. McGinn responded that CELT is reporting its survey results.

Mr. Wacksman said that the town paid 1/3 of the purchase price and is an easement holder in Robinson Woods. Is this a unilateral decision or are you seeking input? What is the process? Is there a vote?

Mrs. McGinn referenced the easement documents that define the town's role as advisory. Mr. Matthieu said that the town dog policy was the result of a lot of work. It seemed appropriate that the town be included in the CELT discussion as an easement holder.

Mr. Tasse asked how CELT will enforce its policy changes? It makes sense for the CELT policy to be consistent with the town policy. Enforcement could then be supplemented by the Police Department.

Mrs. McGinn said the Police would not enforce for CELT properties and Mr. Tasse said that if CELT was under the town scheme, it would be eligible for Police support. Ms. O'Meara was asked to verify this. She agreed that if the town has authority for trail management, such as using a license agreement, then Police support is available.

Mrs. McGinn said that town management was not desirable because Robinson Woods has important habitat. It is "a little special," and if dogs are only under voice control, vernal pools would be impacted. Mr.

Wacksman responded that Gull Crest and Great Pond [town open spaces] are special too. Consensus does not seem possible.

Mr. Tasse acknowledged that CELT controls its property, but the redundancy and inconsistency of rules is confusing to the public.

Ms. Ketcham stated a consistent policy is clearer for dog owners and much easier for Cross Town Trail users if the rules are the same.

Ms. Day asked if you can meet your objectives using town rules? She referenced the town's work on the Cliff House Beach Management Plan to adopt rules that met town goals. Robinson Woods could have the same policy.

Mr. Craig thanked CELT for the information. He walks the trails and he doesn't know the boundaries of town and CELT lands. The town funds acquisitions too. If he doesn't understand the subtleties, then they are lost on the public. He supports consistent rules. There is a town easement. Are there legitimate habitat impacts? Should a trail be closed?

Mr. Matthieu suggested that a trail may be relocated rather than closed, near the pond.

Mr. Tasse thanked CELT for the survey presentation and suggested that they do a count of what user groups are doing on the property.

Easement monitoring: Mrs. McGinn completed monitoring of the Town Farm as part of CELT's easement. There are invasive species, including poison ivy, that she would recommend addressing. It is thick behind the cemetery with autumn olive, barberry. There are town-wide invasives issues and there should be town-wide approach.

Other coordination items: Mr. Matthieu said that CELT provided a letter of support for the Willow Brook culvert grant. CELT has also submitted a Resource Protection Permit application to the Planning Board for bridges and boardwalks on the Pollack Brook Preserve. A later application for Robinson Woods is planned.

Mr. Wacksman offered to help with trail design on both properties, similar to the process used on the Great Pond Preserve.

Mr. Tasse is familiar with the Pollack Brook property and improvements are necessary. He is willing to help relocate trails.

Mr. Matthieu said the trail locations are established and will not be relocated. They considered relocating the bridge but will leave it in the same place. Mr. Tasse agreed the existing bridge location is good.

Mr. Wacksman recommended tripling the landing length (10'-15') to compensate for the hard step off the bridge.

Mr. Matthieu wants to get the improvements in before winter. OBP Trail works is preparing the bridge design for a 26' long span. CELT is still deciding if it will pay a crew for 1 day to install the span or use volunteers. Volunteers will build the boardwalks.

Mr. Tasse said it is a wonderful property with connections to town property and a nice loop.

Mr. Wacksman asked if the permit will include upgrades on Runaway Farms? Mr. Matthieu said CELT would use the town trail assessment.

Mr. Tasse asked about bridge design and Mr. Matthieu said it would comply with Conservation Committee standards. Mr. Tasse and Mr. Matthieu exchanged thanks for the project coordination.

4. Trails CIP Assessment. The committee discussed the master permits for trail improvements. Ms. O'Meara reported that FB Environmental is working on the Town Farm trail improvements. The strategy for master permits is to group permits together but try to keep total impacts under 15,000 sq. ft, above which in lieu fees may apply. For this reason, the town farm trail improvements will be one master permit. Each property will need to be evaluated because some already have permits and the total impact amount is cumulative.

Ms. Ketcham asked what the fee amount is? Ms. O'Meara said that it is calculated by DEP, that there is some flexibility for waivers for projects like public trails, and our consultant will need to work this out. Mr. Craig added that the fee can be met by addressing a problem, or have a restoration benefit, and that needs to be framed in the permit application.

Ms. O'Meara asked about the Trails CIP Assessment report and data. The committee needs some time to review it, and there is also the question of posting it on the town website? Ms. Ketcham suggested the data stay with the committee for now and the committee agreed. The committee agreed to set aside the November meeting for an in-depth review of the assessment. Mr. Wacksman referenced a lengthy priority list the committee created and worked through in 3-4 years. He envisions this same approach with the report. Mr. Tasse concurred that this is a good fall/winter project for the committee.

5. Water Body Naming. On hold for October/November.
6. Greenbelt projects.

Willow Brook Culvert replacement: Ms. O'Meara briefed the committee on the grant application the town is submitted to replace 2 culverts. Mr.

Craig noted that the grant funding comes from in lieu fees mentioned earlier.

Spurwink Marsh Bridge and boardwalk: Ms. O'Meara will be coordinating with a new contractor.

Gull Crest: Mr. Tasse complimented the repairs on the Gull Crest trails by Mr. Wacksman. The committee discussed ordering more board replacements or planning a longer term solution.

Mr. Tasse asked if putting transverse decking on top is reasonable? These improvements will get us at best 5 years. Mr. Wacksman said installing properly sized boards, 3" x 8" x 8'-10' long would improve conditions. He will send Ms. O'Meara information on lumber yards that might provide what is needed. There was discussion on the use of pressure treated wood, which appears to be wearing better.

7. Planning Board review. Ms. O'Meara reviewed the Planning Board items that are applicable to the Conservation Committee. She displayed the Rosewood Subdivision amendment plan, and noted the applicant will pay an open space impact fee. The committee consensus was that there are no changes to the adjacent town-owned open space.

The committee reviewed CELT's application for a Resource Protection Permit for bridges and boardwalks in the Pollack Brook Preserve. The committee wants to see design specifications. The Conservation Committee approved the following recommendation to the Planning Board by a vote of 6-0.

The application is incomplete subject to submission of information on boardwalk and bridge design.

8. Greenbelt maintenance. Mr. Tasse complimented Chris Thompson on trail maintenance, both in quality and value for cost. Mr. Wacksman noted that Mr. Thompson walks his dog on the trails and it helps to have a trail user doing maintenance.
9. The next meeting will be October 13th. The meeting adjourned at 8:42 p.m.