

Readfield Conservation Commission Meeting Notes
Tuesday May 14, 2019, 6:30 pm, Town Office
Approved June 11, 2019

Present: Jerry Bley, Greg Durgin, Marty Hanish, Bruce Hunter, Greg Leimbach, Bob Mohlar, Tim Sniffen.
Excused: Andy Walsh, Brent West.

April minutes were reviewed, amended, and approved.

Old Business

Town Forest Work: We reviewed the May 1, 2019, site visit with Town Forester, Harold Burnett.

1. Farmhouse foundation and cellar hole - (Overgrowth, stumps, and stones make mowing, viewing, or other access very difficult.)

We discussed contracting the job of clearing and grading the area around the foundation, but we have not budgeted this work for the current or next year. Greg L offered to do the work with his tractor and equipment. It would be timely to begin very soon before growth springs up. The RCC appreciated Greg's offer. On schedule review, he decided to start this Thursday, May 16. Tim S will assist.

2. Invasive shrub control – (primarily Japanese honeysuckle and some Asian bittersweet which infest the clearing and woods around the farmhouse site.)

RCC discussed continuing the effort begun in 2008 to eradicate these invasive plants, in an effort to keep the Town Forest healthy.

We will contract with Harold Burnett to arrange for professional herbicide application, to be billed after July 1. \$1200 for this work is in next year's budget.

3. Timber harvest, 2019-20.

We discussed proceeding with a harvest as scheduled and laid out in the current forest management plan (October, 2018), and as described by Harold B on our recent site visit and in his recent proposal. This will include a 21 acre section which is just west and north of the area harvested in 2013-14. Also it will include removal of all ash trees within reach, due to impending ash borer destruction.

The logging contract will also include filling low areas in the Center Lane and Town Farm Rd. Guidelines for roadwork are to be included in the contract, and costs will be deducted from harvest income.

We discussed whether past selective harvests had removed too much tree canopy, allowing invasive shrubs to spread quickly into open spaces. Jerry B will check this with Harold B.

In preparation for the harvest, we will contract with Harold B to arrange for boundary line clearing and blazing. \$1200 for this work is in next year's budget.

This harvest will follow past selective harvest procedures. Requests for bids will be drawn up and sent out by the Town Manager, and will require high standards and Master Logger certification for bids to be considered.

It was moved and seconded that "The Readfield Conservation Commission should proceed with initiation of the harvest for 2019-20 as described in the Forest Management Plan, including recent recommendations by Forester Harold Burnett (invasive plant treatment, and property line clearing/blazing)." Motion passed unanimously.

Jerry B will report this action to Harold Burnett, Forester, and to Eric Dyer, Town Manager.

We briefly discussed the 2024-25 scheduled harvest involving a 26 acre section centrally located in the Town Forest. It includes riparian zones along streams plus a formerly "reserved" area designated to

remain uncut. It is possible that this entire section could be reserved. This would change the harvesting cycle, setting up a 7-year interval between cuttings.

Other Old Business:

Draper property status –

Jerry B reported that after the Draper family reserves 1 or 2 house lots, the New England Forestry Foundation will proceed with establishing an easement.

Readfield Fairgrounds parking lot expansion –

The Town Manager is overseeing this operation. Only one tree along the stonewall will need to be removed. The expansion will extend north to the small trees. Large stones will be moved and brought in to mark the new boundary. Members were encouraged to monitor the work.

Recreational Trails Grant –

Town request for reimbursement for last year's work was submitted in February. Jerry B has reminded the State Bureau of Parks, and the request is being processed.

Former Belle Vue Farm land sale –

Jerry B has alerted the Maine Farmland Trust to the sale of this scenic property across from the Jesse Lee Church. MFT is interested in working with possible buyers to establish an agricultural easement for this property. We expect to hear more about this soon.

New Business:

Open Space goals –

1. Carleton Pond watershed: Jerry B reported that Howard Lake (KLT Lands Committee) will be lead person for talking with Brian Tarbuck of the Augusta Water Utilities District about the possibility of an conservation easement for this Carleton Pond property.
2. Cooperating with neighboring Conservation Commissions and the Kennebec Land Trust: In order to encourage these relationships, it was suggested that we consider having a summer barbecue. To be discussed at June meeting.

Vernal Pool Inventory wrap up – No progress in past month.

Torsey Pond Nature Preserve –

Tim S reported wet areas just beyond the first footbridge.

It was felt this could be a fall student workday project. Tim will flag areas that are wet.

Esker Trail –

Greg D reported that Kents Hill School students laid geo-fabric and spread wood chips in low areas during a successful recent Trails Committee workday.

Readfield Messenger –

Tim S asked if anyone were interested in doing an article for the next issue. He may try to do one on gardening substitutes for invasive plant species.

Meeting was adjourned at about 8:30 pm.

Submitted by Tim Sniffen