

Readfield Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, September 10, 2019, Town Office

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

Excused: Bob Mohlar (emeritus)

New Business

Potential Trail Development at Carleton Pond – Brian Tarbuck, General Manager of the Greater Augusta Utility District (GAUD), attended the RCC meeting to discuss potential trail development at the Carleton Pond property with RCC and several stakeholder groups including: Chris Reilly, Central Maine NEMBA; Bill Brann and Nancy Buker, Blizzard Busters; Greg Durgin, Rob Peale, and Bob Harris, Readfield Trails, and Howard Lake, Kennebec Land Trust. Most of the 700-800 acre property is located in Readfield (568 acres) with the remaining acreage in Winthrop; the pond is approximately 220 acres. Brian T. indicated at the start that GAUD's Board of Trustees may be amenable to recreational trails on the property. He stated that the pond is no longer used as a source of drinking water for Augusta (as of 2004) and that operational costs are funded by tree harvesting. The existing building on the property is no longer being used and will likely not be in the future. One of GAUD's biggest concerns is dog waste on the property. GAUD does not want to allow fishing or swimming in the pond. The Blizzard Busters snowmobile club was permitted access to the property last winter on the fire road on the southeasterly side of the pond which is higher and drier (access by snowmobiles will be allowed this coming winter). GAUD wants to maintain the fire road to provide emergency access as needed (e.g., fire).

The group discussed some preliminary use options, such as a parking area (Rt. 17?), trailhead location, multiple and single use trail alternatives, etc. Brian T. was not sure whether a license for use (e.g., 5 yr. term) would be required and renewed subject to use compliance. He indicated that trails could be sited adjacent to the pond. Brian T. suggested that RCC and the stakeholders submit a proposal inclusive of all interested recreational groups (snowmobile, mountain biking, hiking, skiing, etc.) for Board review.

RCC Meeting Minutes - A motion was made and seconded by Readfield Conservation Commission (RCC) members to approve the July 9, 2019 RCC meeting minutes as amended.

Summer Barbecue – Final details and logistics for the summer barbecue were discussed by RCC including anticipated number of attendees, timeframe (4:30-6:30, Saturday, September 14th), and who would be bringing what food items.

Old Business

Town Forest, tree harvest and invasive plant management – The next timber harvest at the town forest is scheduled for this winter (2019-20). Harold Burnett (Town Forester) hired a contractor (Hanley) in spring 2019 to spray honeysuckle in the 2013-14 harvest area. Brent W. and Andy W. walked the 2013-14 harvest area on September 7, 2019 to assess the current presence/absence of invasive shrubs and to identify options for managing shrub growth in and around the town farm cellarhole. RCC has scheduled a workday on October 27, 2019 to cut and remove shrub growth at the town farm site to maintain this important local historic site. Based on the minimal shrub growth in/near the old barn foundation (which is beneath a tree canopy), it was suggested that some tree growth be encouraged (or planted) for shading out shrubs.

Fairgrounds Property – An on-site meeting is scheduled for September 22, 2019 to lay out a trail to the pulling stones.

Brent W. discussed email correspondence regarding the trail relocation at the Fairgrounds near the parking lot. Doug Beck, representative of RTP which provided grant funds for the project, suggested use of a guardrail/fence to separate the trail and parking lot. Brent W. will contact Mr. Beck to clarify the proposal, which is to use existing boulders to provide separation (both Eric Dyer and Anna Carll, Town of Readfield, will be kept in the loop). Work is scheduled for October to include moving the boulders and softening the slope transition between the parking lot and existing trail on the northeasterly corner of the parking lot.

Belle Vue Farm – Jerry B. spoke with Chris Franklin of Maine Farmland Trust (project manager) who indicated that potential buyers for the farm have not pursued the purchase opportunity.

Miscellaneous – RCC had a brief follow-up to the earlier discussion of Carleton Pond, suggesting next steps including a site visit by the end of October.

Greg D. reported vandalism of two signs on Fairgrounds Property on the section of trail near the school. Bob Harris (Readfield Trails) fixed the damage to the signs.

Meeting adjourned approx. 8:45 p.m.
Submitted by Andy Walsh