

Readfield Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, November 12, 2019, Town Office

Present: Marty Hanish, Bruce Hunter, Jerry Bley, Brent West, Stephanie Donaldson (new RCC member), Andy Walsh

Excused: Greg Durgin, Greg Leimbach, Tim Sniffen, Bob Mohlar (emeritus)

Guests: Maureen Kinder, Chris Olson and Dave Erb (for pulling stones discussion); Rob Peale (Carleton Pond trails)

Pulling Stones Trail Proposal (Fairgrounds property) – Jerry B. updated the group regarding the pulling stone trail project and abutter concerns. Options identified for accessing the remaining pulling stones include: 1) creating a trail to the pulling stones; 2) moving the stones to a new location, or 3) leave the stones in their current location with the location of the stones shown on an interpretive panel.

RCC members met on-site with the Readfield Historical Society (RHS)(Oct. 24, 2019) to discuss moving some of the pulling stones and how to inform the public of their significance in relation to the Fairgrounds' history. RHS agreed that 6 of the 12 pulling stones could be moved to a new location (~50 ft. northerly of the intersection of the existing trail and the partially constructed pulling stones trail) and that an interpretive panel will be created to describe the significance of the pulling stones and the property's history. Dale Potter-Clark will work on the text for the interpretive panel which will be located trailside near the six relocated stones. The stones will be moved on a sled pulled by oxen to the new location next summer (2020). The route used to move the six pulling stones may follow the partially constructed trail. Chris Olson, Maureen Kinder, and Dave Erb, residents of Old Fairgrounds Road, expressed concerns about the project, including increased visitor use, the relocated stones posing a danger along the trail (e.g., to skiers), and the potential for damage to the environment during moving of the stones (e.g., to trees).

Following discussion, Jerry B. made a motion to *"move a portion of the pulling stones to an exhibit area along the existing trail using non-disruptive methods and to abandon the partially constructed trail to the original pulling stone site."* Motion seconded by Marty H. and unanimously approved by RCC members. Jerry B. will notify the Select Board of RCC's proposal.

New RCC Member – Stephanie Donaldson, RCC's prospective member, introduced herself to the group and expressed her interests in joining the committee. Welcome Stephanie!

RCC Meeting Minutes - A motion was made and seconded by RCC members to approve the October 15, 2019 RCC meeting minutes as amended by Greg Durgin.

New Business

Carleton Pond Watershed, Proposed Trails – Rob Peale (Readfield Trails Committee - RTC) will draft an initial letter to the Greater Augusta Utility District (GAUD) to express RCC/RTC's interest in developing trails at GAUD's Carleton Pond property. Rob Peale suggested meeting with GAUD's Board before developing a proposal to determine what options/limitations there may be to the trail building effort. The town of Readfield can't expend funds on trail building unless they have an easement for trail access; in the absence of an easement, trail work will be a voluntary effort. Jerry B. suggests that RTC take the lead on trail design and to involve Chris Riley (New England Mountain Bike Association) and other stakeholders in conceptualizing the trail design. Rob Peale will circulate the draft letter to RCC prior to

submitting to GAUD and Bruce H. will check with Brian Tarbuck (GAUD) to see if an initial meeting with the Board is possible to discuss the trails on the Carleton Pond property.

Town Forest – Only two bids came back for the 20-acre winter tree harvest and both are unacceptable (i.e., price for buying the wood too low). Harold Burnett indicated that a late summer/fall harvest could work and would allow road work to be wrapped into the contract (winter harvest is preferable but couldn't do the road work then). Town will advertise earlier (February 2020) for a tree harvest next year. Jerry B. moved to reject the bids as written and plan to schedule the harvest in 2020. Brent W. seconded; approved by RCC.

RCC discussed the recent observation of an unoccupied, temporary deer blind in the town forest; specifically whether it is allowable to leave temporary hunting structures on the property and how they may affect other recreational uses on the property. Hunting is allowed on the town forest, per the management plan. RCC members suggested that use of a pop-up blind on the property may be okay but that it should not be left on the property and may dissuade other recreational uses. Also, ownership of the blind should be clearly marked. Use of a temporary deer blind on town conservation properties (where hunting allowed) is a policy question that will require more discussion with the full committee at the next RCC meeting.

Fairground Parking Lot – Brent W. reported on recent trail work at the parking lot including leveling of the trail near the boulders (separating the trail from the parking area) with geotextile, crushed stone, and topsoil; the smooth transition of the trail to the existing footpath, and relocation of the porta-potty. Additional work to be completed this year includes extending the trail from the parking lot to the MacDougal Trail (trail will wrap around the corner of the parking lot and link up with the existing trail). Once all work is completed, a report will be submitted to Doug Beck, RTP grants manager.

Meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.
Submitted by Andy Walsh