

Readfield Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes

February 13, 2018, 6:30 p.m., Town Office

Present: Bruce Hunter (chair), Greg Durgin, Jerry Bley, Tim Sniffen, Martin Hanish, Greg Leimbach, Brent West, Robert Mohlar, Andy Walsh

Absent:

A motion was made and seconded by Readfield Conservation Commission (RCC) members to approve the January 9, 2017 RCC meeting minutes as amended.

Discussion of Revision Energy Solar Power Agreement Proposal – Select Board member John Parent discussed the status of the Revision Energy (RE) solar panel project with RCC members, providing a history of the initiative and an overview of RE's proposal. He mentioned RE's presentation to the Select Board and field trips to look at different locations where solar panels could be placed, including town-owned buildings, transfer station, fairgrounds property, old landfill site, etc. RE and Select Board members discussed the pros and cons of each potential site. The Fairgrounds site was identified as the most feasible location. John P. also discussed the proposed agreement between the Town of Readfield and RE should the Town go forward with the project.

RCC member comments on the proposal focused on the compatibility of solar panels and current uses of the Fairgrounds property, which is managed for conservation and recreation. Tim S. indicated that the Fairgrounds Property management plan does not identify light industrial uses, such as solar panels, as an authorized use of the property. Brent W. mentioned that installation of solar panels on the property would set a new precedent for land use of the town's conservation properties. There was also discussion about whether school property could be used to site the solar project. Current use levels, presence of the ballfield, etc., were identified by RCC members as other reasons why the solar project is not compatible with the intended management and use of the Fairgrounds property. Marty H. suggested that the town use the services of the Kennebec Valley Council of Governments to help review the proposal. RCC also wants to ensure that all town parties to the solar initiative maintain open communication throughout the vetting process.

John P. hoped the proposal could be put on the Town Meeting warrant in June 2018 but thought it may be delayed until the spring 2019 town meeting. Jerry B. asked whether an article that is non-site specific could be placed on the warrant.

Old Business

Trail Infrastructure Replacement Project Status – Jerry B. indicated that an RFP should be issued by the end of March and that Eric D. (Town Administrator) will work with RCC to put it together. RCC members discussed the merits of using either local general contractors or contractors that specialize in trail building. The

RFP can be structured to allow bidding on the whole project or specific components that require specialized skills (e.g., stonework). Jerry B. will have a draft RFP for the next RCC meeting.

Vernal Pool Project – Jerry B. will update Bruce H. regarding what's needed to complete the vernal pool project.

Winter Projects – Jerry B., Howard Lake, and Jean-Luc Theriault (KLT) discussed the materials needed to replace the footbridge on a section of the Outer Loop Trail at Readfield Town Forest (i.e., trail section linking the Jones Brook Trail and the Inner Loop Trail). The type of lumber to be used (cedar, hemlock, pressure treated wood) and where to purchase it was then discussed. Cedar is preferred but the type of lumber used will depend on cost and availability. Also different types of lumber could be used for different components of given structure. Tim S. and Brent W. will check pricing and availability with several vendors. A Kennebec Land Trust crew will do the work. RCC moved to authorize up to \$850 for lumber and hardware to replace the footbridge. The motion was approved. RCC members expressed a preference for transporting lumber during the winter (snow cover) to avoid damaging groundcover.

Review of Open Space Goals – Brent W. reviewed the Readfield Open Space Plan relative to goals and actions identified and whether RCC or other town committees had accomplished the same. The Plan identifies actions such as continuing partnerships, developing a trails committee, working with developers to establish trail easements, conducting outreach to landowners (e.g., to sell or donate conservation easements where appropriate), protecting wildlife habitat, interesting other conservation organizations in protecting land in town, and strengthening protection of existing conservation parcels (e.g., Carleton property). Some of the goals/actions have been accomplished (e.g., establishing a trails committee). Based on review, Brent W. recommends that RCC 1) update maps in the OS Plan; 2) focus on achievable goals that are broad in scope; 3) add timetable for deliverables, and 4) focus zoning efforts on shorelines to minimize development.

Tim S. handed out pages copied from the 2008 Town Comprehensive Plan outlining RCC responsibilities. Our current activities are in line with these responsibilities."

Goshawk Survey – KLT will be conducting a goshawk survey in March at the Readfield Town Forest to determine whether the birds will be using the property for nesting, etc. Ten volunteers are needed. Jerry B. will forward the email from Leslie Latt (survey coordinator) to RCC members.

Miscellaneous Items - We briefly discussed the Augusta Water District land around Carleton Pond, and the Draper property near the Town Forest. There has been no recent change of status in either property.

At the Fairgrounds property, this spring we plan to build a short loop trail to the old bleachers site which will allow viewing of the pulling stones.

The Annual Report will be due soon and we hope to review it at our March meeting.

Meeting Adjourned at 8:35

Submitted by Andy Walsh (Secretary)