

Readfield Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, October 13, 2020, Town Office

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

RCC Meeting Minutes - A motion was made by Stephanie D. and seconded by Jerry B. to approve the September 8, 2020 meeting minutes as amended; unanimously approved by RCC members. Tim S. and Andy W. abstained.

New Business

Torsey Pond N. P., Viewing Blind Graffiti – Brent W. sanded the graffiti off the viewing blind (thank you Brent!). Kents Hill School Environmental Studies teacher (Andrew Deaett) offered to have students carry lumber for new bog bridging on the Orange Trail. Tim S. emailed KLT regarding the need for “No Hunting” signs at TPNP to ensure compliance with preserve rules. Tim S. suggested that a sign be placed in the viewing blind and at the trailhead to deter hunters. TPNP includes ~20 acres of submerged land fronting the viewing blind that was flooded when the pond was dammed. Tim S. will post the signs at the viewing blind and trailhead.

Protecting Farmland in Readfield – Jerry B. suggested that Eric Dyer (Town manager) attend the next RCC meeting to discuss this initiative. Bruce H. will send Eric D. an invitation. Greg L. suggested that farmland protection can be done through a Comprehensive Plan update. He mentioned that the City of Auburn has an “agricultural zone.”

Updating the Comprehensive Plan is a 2-year process. Greg D. has volunteered to lead/represent RCC during the process. Andy W. offered to assist in review of the natural resources section of the plan; other members welcome to participate. Greg L. suggested that RCC should carefully review the plan from a conservation standpoint (i.e., review drafts, comment, make recommendations, etc.). RCC members should familiarize themselves with the current plan.

Old Business

Highland Ridge Farm Solar Array – Jerry B. worked with Highland Ridge landowner, Dean Sciaraffa, to formulate an agricultural easement which will be incorporated into the project permit. The easement will protect the property’s agricultural productivity and viewshed, while allowing for alternative energy production. The easement does not cover the 20-acres where the solar array will be sited; this area will be returned to agricultural land use and protected by the easement when the solar array is decommissioned. Jerry B. voiced RCC’s support for the agricultural easement at the September 23 Planning Board meeting.

Marty H. suggested that the presumed success of the negotiated agricultural easement for the property would be an informative story for "Maine Town and City" magazine. The Planning Board meeting is scheduled for October 14.

Outdoor Recreational and Conservation Areas Map – Jerry B. sent edits to Art Grindle (Kennebec County Soil and Water Conservation District) and will follow up with Mr. Grindle.

Town Forest RFP – Jerry B. reported that pulp prices are moving in the right direction; Jerry will follow up with Harold Burnett (town forester).

Hunting Blind Draft Proposal – Jerry B. needs to review edits with Eric Dyer and is not certain if the Select Board has reviewed the draft proposal. Edits will include extending the set up time to 1 week before the season starts to allow hunters time to scout out locations. Also, the policy may not be implemented until next year's hunting season.

Town Conservation Properties

Old Fairgrounds Property – The group briefly discussed the pulling stones celebration and historic signs. Funding for the signage will be provided through the Historic Society. Andy W. discussed the September 16th meeting with Anna Carl regarding the mowing plan for the fields; Bruce H. Tim S. and Stephanie D. also attended. Implementation of the mowing guidelines (where feasible) were discussed, as well as some specifics such as cutting the sprouting poplars from the far field edge.

Torsey Pond N. P. – previously discussed

Town Forest – Funds have been budgeted for the mowing at the TF; however, Howard Lake doesn't think mowing is necessary this year since little or no woody vegetation is coming up.

Fogg Farm Property – no changes

Miscellaneous – Stephanie D. mentioned that a property on Torsey Shores Road has a holding tank is sited near the edge of the pond. The owner, who has a trailer going on the site, was told the tank is sited too close to the water. Greg L. mentioned that holding tanks are not allowed per municipal code. Stephanie D. will contact the code officer (Jaime Hanson).

Meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Submitted by Andy Walsh on September 1, 2020