

Readfield Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes  
Tuesday, November 10, 2020, Town Office

Present: Bruce Hunter, Jerry Bley, Greg Leimbach, Andy Walsh, Stephanie Donaldson, Marty Hanish

Excused: Greg Durgin, Tim Sniffen, Brent West, Bob Mohlar

RCC Meeting Minutes - A motion was made by Bruce H. and seconded by Stephanie D. to approve the October 13, 2020 meeting minutes as amended; unanimously approved by RCC members.

### **New Business**

Farmland Protection Discussion – Eric Dyer (TM) led a discussion of tools the town might use to protect farmland in Readfield. Previous Comprehensive Plans were more proactive in preserving farmland; more recent demographic shifts related to the pandemic may trigger more development in town. Eric D. is looking for a range of options for farmland protection. Some ideas discussed included:

- Establishing a separate fund to purchase development rights or to buy land outright.
- Options such as tax credits for landowners to offset property values with easements that would partially restrict land uses.
- Making a personal pitch to farmland owners regarding the agricultural/scenic/conservation values of their lands and the available options to protect it before it goes on the market.
- Identifying priority agricultural land in town by referencing NRCS soil maps. Maine Farmland Trust targets lands with prime farmland soils.
- Zoning lands with mapped prime farmland soils to limit certain types of development (could be construed as a “taking”).
- Attracting young farmers to work available farmland and eventually take ownership of the land (i.e., passing land on to the next generation). Local example is the Amish community of farmers in the town of Whitefield.
- Offering fair market value for a property. Maine Farmland Trust has the resources to acquire farmland; e.g., Maine Farmland Trust covers ~75% of purchase cost with the remainder paid by the town (~25%).
- Utilize the town’s Open Space Fund to purchase land (funds come from a development fee to offset impacts).
- Kennebec Valley Council of Governments (KVCOG) could potentially help as they assist municipalities in planning and securing funding for projects.
- Eric D. would like to have a project underway to add to the Comprehensive Plan.

Farmland currently for sale (Hewitt Farm, Rt. 135, Plains Road) may be a test case. Greg L. offered to talk with Jake Hewitt.

Firearms Ordinance – The Select Board would like to revise the firearms ordinance and take a more holistic approach that would combine firearms, tree stands/blinds, archery, etc. Hunters want more specificity regarding where hunting can occur in town. The Select Board wants to take a broader look at these uses on town properties. A town ordinance will allow more control of activities than a separate policy (i.e., hunting blind policy).

Discussion will be needed to identify which town properties should be open to hunting. RCC recommended speaking with a game warden to discuss which properties are suited for firearms, archery, etc. RCC postponed additional discussion on this issue for a future meeting.

Readfield Comprehensive Plan Revisions – Scheduled for next meeting

Town Forest Signs - Scheduled for next meeting

Readfield Outdoor Recreational and Conservation Areas Map – The map is finished and has been submitted to Art Grindell (Kennebec County Soil and Water Conservation District); thanks to Jerry B., Greg L., and Brent W.

Readfield Town Forest Pulp Prices – Jerry B. will circulate an article from the KJ that discusses the status of pulp pricing in Maine.

Meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

Submitted by Andy Walsh on December 6, 2020