

Readfield Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, May 11, 2021, Town Office

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

RCC Meeting Minutes - A motion was made by Tim S. and seconded by Greg D. to approve the April 13, 2021 meeting minutes as amended; unanimously approved by RCC members.

New Business

Torsey Pond N.P. Trail Work and Signs – Jerry B. and Greg L. put up 24 new trail signs at intersections and for various points of interest at the nature preserve. The cost for the signs, made at the State Prison in Warren, was \$360.

RCC members scheduled a workday (May 16, 2021, 9:00 a.m.) at the nature preserve to install an erosion/water control structure (box culvert) and to improve drainage by digging some cross swales (dip and berm) to direct water off the trail near the first stream crossing (footbridge). Most of the materials for the work are currently at the site.

Status of Invasive Honeysuckle, Readfield Town Forest – Tim S., Stephanie D. and Andy W. gave an overview of a field visit to the RTF on April 21, 2021 to inspect the 2013-14 harvest area and the woods bordering the center lane for invasive honeysuckle. Invasive honeysuckle was observed mainly in the harvest area, with very few invasives noted in the pine woods along the center lane. RCC agreed that members will try to eradicate as much as possible in lieu of hiring a contractor. A workday to remove honeysuckle is scheduled for Sunday, June 13, 2021 at 9:00 a.m.

May Bird Walk – The bird walk discussed as an RCC-led town social event will be postponed to next year (will schedule and plan the event in March 2022).

Old Business

Tree Harvest at Readfield Town Forest – Jerry B. indicated that the tree harvest will be scheduled late summer 2021. Harold Burnett (Town Forester) will solicit RFP's by the end of May. The market is improving with saw timber prices increasing. Tim S. suggested leaving the planned 2024-25 harvest area uncut. RCC members agreed to discuss this further as it would affect the income stream for the RCLA.

Farming and Agriculture in Readfield, RCC Game Plan - Bruce H. contacted Ben Slayton, owner of Farmers' Gate Market (Butcher Shop) in Leeds, Maine. Mr. Slayton suggest engaging Amish and young people interested in farming and connecting them to areas in town with prime agricultural land/soils. Greg L. reviewed his email

from February 10, 2021 which recommended that RCC conduct a comprehensive review and assessment of the town's agricultural policies, programs and demographics. The review is in conjunction with the Comp Plan update in order to support community based agriculture and farming. Greg L. has conducted a literature review to inform the tasks needed to achieve the objective described above and has reviewed the zoning map.

Next steps include: review/contacting the state's farming program under the Maine Dept. of Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry (Greg L. will do); review the Town of Monmouth's tax abatement program for farmers, and assess and update information regarding town demographics relative to farmers. Greg L. mentioned several maps in the town's Open Space Plan that should be updated (e.g., conservation lands, farmland area, resource maps, etc.) and reviewed some strategies to pursue (e.g., attracting young farmers, protecting existing farms and farmland, zoning). Also need to develop strategies to assist existing and new farmers in being a productive and economically viable. Greg L. is looking for additional comments.

Comprehensive Plan Update – no update; Bruce H. missed last meeting. Next meeting is May 19.

Regarding update of the Open Space (OS) section of the Comp Plan, RCC will take the lead in reviewing this section. Also need to update the OS plan (update due June 2022), which would be an attachment to the Comp Plan.

Age Friendly Committee Grant, Fairgrounds Trails – RCC will provide match for the recently awarded \$2,000 grant from the Maine Community Foundation for trail improvements to trails at the Fairgrounds. Funds for the match must be approved at town meeting in June. Jerry B. and Greg D. will scope out where trail re-surfacing is needed (e.g., trail section from Rt. 17 to past Bruce H.'s house; others trail sections every 5 years). Also, a culvert near the ball field needs to be replaced. Will need a tractor to move bluestone and a vibrating roller (rental?) to compact new material.

Recreation Committee, New Fields at Fairgrounds – The Recreation Committee is interested in building a new softball field for girls. It's not clear if the demand exists for a new field and whether or not leagues can make greater use of the school complex.

Long Range Plan for Town Conservation Properties – Discussion postponed, but question is: What do we see as important uses for the town conservation properties that we oversee?

Meeting adjourned at 8:27 p.m.

Submitted by Andy Walsh on June 5, 2021