

Readfield Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, September 14, 2021, Readfield Town Beach

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

Guests: Hannah Flannery (Recreation Cmte. chair)

Excused: Brent West, Lisa Garside, Marty Hanish

RCC Meeting Minutes – Greg D. motioned to approve the August 10, 2021 RCC meeting minutes as written; seconded by Bruce H., and approved by all. Greg L. requested that the meeting minutes be made available for review within a few days following the meeting.

New Business

Fairgrounds Softball Field Proposal – Hannah Flannery, chair of the Recreation Committee, joined the RCC members to discuss the plan for the proposed softball field. Bruce H. provided an updated plan from Main-Land Development Consultants, dated 7/9/2021. Hannah F. then asked if RCC members had any questions. Bruce H. noted the new plan (version 2) layout showed a lower grade of the ballfield relative to the initial plan, a basketball court to be located just south of the existing parking lot, and a concession stand next to the access road to the existing ballfield. Greg D. and Jerry B. asked if there are other existing fields (e.g., Readfield elementary school) that could meet the need for an additional softball field. Hannah F. indicated that it's not certain that the school property is on town property and whether the Recreation Cmte. has any rights to restore the field. Hannah F. also mentioned that it would be best to have the ballfields in one place, and that ball games at Fairgrounds would likely be staggered with only one game ongoing at a time. The existing ballfield at the Fairgrounds is used by 6th graders (Little League) and the new ballfield will be used for girls softball up to the 6th grade level and possibly by an adult softball team.

Greg L. mentioned that the capacity of the existing parking lot is for 109 vehicles. Use of the current overflow parking area (mowed area next to access road beyond the metal gate) is deemed okay but only for handicapped access only. Hannah F. was not sure if the Recreation Cmte. will object to this limitation. Greg D. asked about the estimated cost of the new ballfield. Andy W. requested an analysis of alternative sites (i.e., existing recreational fields) in town that might meet the need for a new ballfield. Greg L. asked whether the original, larger scale ballfield project (i.e., the existing ballfield at the Fairgrounds) was approved by Town committees. Greg D. stated that the Planning Board approved the project and that Town Meeting voted to approve the project but no tax dollars could be used. Jerry B. indicated that RCC gave approval to a smaller ballfield and parking lot proposal, but didn't take a position on the larger ballfield proposal (they didn't have to). The project was ultimately scaled down due to the cost, which was paid for by donations only.

Old Business

Town Forest Update – Eric Dyer (Town Manager) approved the logging contractor selected by the RCC, although it hasn't been confirmed if the contract was signed (Jerry B. assumed that authorization is in process). The harvest is scheduled for winter but some work may happen if there's a dry period in the fall.

Conservation Tip of the Month – Greg L. is working on a map showing farm stand locations in town and conducting outreach for pollinator information. Greg L. will distribute the tip sheet to help pollinators for RCC review and will then send it to Town Office for inclusion in the next Messenger (due Sept. 22).

Open Space Plan discussion, 2021-22 Comprehensive Plan revision – discussion postponed.

Farming and Agriculture in Readfield, RCC Game Plan – Greg L. completed a summary of what's lacking in the current Comp and Open Space plans with respect to farming/agriculture. Greg L.'s focus is on agriculture and did not include any related natural resource issues (e.g., grassland birds, pollinators). Greg L. will send what he's completed to date to Jessica Gorton, who's working on the Comp Plan update. Bruce H. mentioned that work on the Comp Plan has slowed due to some member changes in CP update committee.

Age Friendly Committee Grant, Fairgrounds Trails – The crushed stone purchased through the grant and RCC monies will be used during the Oct. 7 workday. Work will entail repairing two sections of the trail network near the Rt. 17. Available tractors will be used to move stone on Oct. 6 and Maranacook students will assist on Oct. 7. Other RCC volunteers will work at Torsey Pond N.P. on Oct. 7 on erosion control (water bars and ditching) along the Orange Trail. Andy W. and Stephanie D. will schedule some time (date to be determined) to remove invasive glossy buckthorn at Torsey Pond N.P.

Long Range Planning (Town Conservation Properties) – Discussion postponed. Greg L. suggested surveying residents for input via the Messenger or Town Facebook page.

Pulling Stones, Fairgrounds Property – The pulling stones have been moved into place and the old stone sled is fastened to the stones. An interpretive sign will be erected as part of the exhibit. Jerry B. will send a thank you note to Brendan Fike for his assistance in this project. An interpretive brochure describing the importance of pollinators and the Fairgrounds' fields for pollinators was also mentioned.

Maranacook Student Workday, October 7, 2021 - Maranacook students will help on two projects on October 7. Crushed stone purchased through the Age Friendly Committee Grant and RCC monies will be used to repair the surface of Fairgrounds Trails. Work will entail repairing two sections of the trail network near the Rt. 17.

Available tractors will be used to move stone on Oct. 6 to be ready for the students to spread it on Oct. 7. Other students will work with RCC volunteers at Torsey Pond N.P. on Oct. 7 on erosion control (water bars and ditching) along the Orange Trail.

Andy W. and Stephanie D. will schedule some time (date to be determined) to remove invasive glossy buckthorn at Torsey Pond N.P.

RCC Member Changes – Bruce H. informed the group that Tim Sniffen's term on the RCC expired and he has chosen not to renew.

Meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Submitted by Andy Walsh on September 28, 2021