

Readfield Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes (final amended minutes)  
Tuesday, October 12, 2021, Readfield

Present: Bruce Hunter, Jerry Bley, Greg Durgin, Marty Hanish, Andy Walsh

Guest: Tim Sniffen

Excused: Brent West, Stephanie Donaldson

RCC Meeting Minutes – Greg D. motioned to approve the September 14, 2021 RCC meeting minutes as amended; seconded by Marty H. and approved unanimously.

### **New Business**

Committee Chairs Meeting – Bruce H. gave an overview of the Cmte. Chairs meeting. Eric D. (Town Manager) wants more public involvement in the town's boards, commissions, and committees. Among the issues pertinent to the RCC is the timely receipt of monthly meeting minutes to the Town clerk. Unapproved minutes shall be submitted to the Town Clerk within one week of the meeting being held. Approved minutes shall be submitted to the Town Clerk for filing and posting on the web site within one week of approval.

Weed mitigation, Fairgrounds Property – Greg D. informed the RCC that Steve Hayes of the Trail Cmte. wants to control weeds along trails at the Fairgrounds Property. Steve will use a solution of vinegar (20%), sodium chloride (table salt), and Dawn detergent to kill weedy overgrowth on the trail edges. A pump sprayer will likely be used and the spray will be applied close to the ground to avoid drift, which could kill nearby, desired plant cover. The section of trail between Rte. 17 and the kiosk will be targeted first. The solution will kill weeds in approximately one week. No pesticides will be used. Shawn Drinkwater (Director, RSU#38) approved the weed control plan as long as pesticides are not used.

### **Old Business**

Maranacook Student Workday – Bruce H. informed the RCC that the student workday was productive although insufficient bluestone was available to complete some of the proposed work.

Town Forest Update – Jerry B. stated that no date is yet available for road repairs at the Town Forest. Harold Burnett (Readfield Town Forester) sent the timber contracts to Eric Dyer for signature. Coupling the road repairs with the tree harvesting would be optimal.

Town Conservation Properties, Long Range Plan – deferred

Softball Field Proposal, Fairgrounds Property – Jerry B. noted that the current ballfield proposal fits with the overall intent of the Fairgrounds Management Plan (FMP), the intent of which is to meet public needs as the town grows. "Developed

recreation” is among the potential uses of the property. However, the RCC is concerned that the Town and the Recreation Cmte. may be taking the Fairgrounds Property (FP) in a direction different from what’s in the FMP. RCC members agreed that holding a workshop will be a good forum to discuss the ballfield proposal. Marty H. stated that the process must adhere to that outlined in the FMP (VII. Criteria for Developed Uses of the Property) and that the FMP should be followed unless amended. Andy W. recommended that RCC press the ballfield proponent for a thorough examination of alternatives (as stated in the FMP) and that the town consider the development at the FP that has happened since the FMP was written in 1995, including the existing baseball field, parking lot, and addition to the existing cemetery. Greg D. reminded members that RCC manages and protects the FP in accordance with the FMP. Jerry B. recommended that no Select Board hearing take place on the ballfield proposal until a workshop is held (Eric D. agreed during a prior meeting with Jerry B. and Bruce H.).

RCC members agreed to ask Laura Lecker, Technical Director of Somerset County Soil and Water Conservation District, to attend the workshop and speak on the ecological and conservation values of the field in the footprint of the proposed softball field and the FP as a whole. Jerry B. suggested that each party at the workshop (RCC, Recr. Cmte., Trail Cmte.) prepare a written document outlining their goals for the FP and view on the softball field proposal. Marty H. would like to have copies of the FMP available for whoever wants one.

RCC briefly discussed the mowing regime for the large field abutting the FP (on school property) and the other school fields adjacent to the trail leading to Millard Harrison Way. Jerry B. believes that the field is hayed annually in late August, baled and taken by the farmer who mows it. It’s not clear how productive the field is for quality hay. Andy W. requested that the mowing schedule be confirmed and to see how management might be changed (if necessary) to benefit wildlife and pollinators. Greg D. will contact Shawn Drinkwater (Operations & Transportation Director, Maranacook School) for confirmation.

Readfield Town Forest – Tim S. recommended that caution signs be posted at RTF before deer hunting season begins (recommending blaze orange outerwear).

Conservation Tip of the Month – Andy W. suggested that RCC re-commit to submitting articles to the Messenger; the group agreed to submit an article quarterly (every 3 months). Tim S. will write an article on the recent student workday.

Farming and Agriculture in Readfield – Bruce H. said he will continue with the work Greg Leimbach was doing for the Comp Plan concerning farming and agriculture in town. Manchester and Monmouth have prepared a report summarizing their work on bringing farming back into their communities.

Readfield Conservation Commission Charter – In-depth discussion is postponed to allow everyone to review the charter. Marty H. thought RCC should consider outreach to Maranacook H.S. students as an opportunity to immerse them in how a conservation commission works and the conservation issues in a small town.

Meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Submitted by Andy Walsh on October 18, 2021