

Readfield Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes  
Tuesday, January 11, 2022

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

Guest: Tim Sniffen

Excused: Brent West

RCC Meeting Minutes – Bruce H. motioned to approve the December 14, 2021 RCC meeting minutes with revisions; seconded by Marty H.

### **New Business**

#### Discussion regarding proposed recreational development at the Fairgrounds (Eric D.'s 3 questions)

Marty H. recommended that an annual contribution be made to a conservation fund to mitigate for the loss of habitat at the Fairgrounds property (FG) if the ballfield proposal goes forward. Funds could be used for the management of existing town land (e.g., field at the old town landfill). Jerry B. mentioned the existing Open Space Fund (OSF) which is used for acquisitions/easements only, not for management of land. The OSF is a restricted account used solely for a specific purpose. Marty H. suggested that the OSF's purpose be broadened to include management of conservation land. A \$10K allocation (tax dollars) was made to the account in 2021 and may be repeated in subsequent warrants. Jerry B. indicated that this allocation amount is reasonable with additional funds secured as needed if a viable land conservation project is identified.

Jerry B. also suggested that some of the Recreation Cmte's budget for the project (if tax dollars) could be used to mitigate the ballfield's impact to habitat. The costs of restoring lost pollinator habitat at the old landfill (or other location) needs to be determined possibly through consultation with Laura Lecker (Technical Director, Somerset County Soil & Water Conservation District). In the interim, RCC agreed to see how the ballfield planning process proceeds. Marty H. will inquire about the OSF at the next Budget meeting. Jerry B. will ask Eric D. if open space funding will be included in this year's town warrant.

Eric D. (Town Manager) asked the three committees participating in the December 7, 2021 meeting to discuss the ballfield proposal (Recreation, Trails, and Conservation) to summarize their expectations/programs, preferences, and must have's regarding the proposed project. Marty H. recommended that the town follow the process provided in the Fair Grounds Management Plan for evaluating alternative uses of the FG. Marty H. also recommended that, other than planning and evaluation, no work proceed until a long term, comprehensive plan is adopted, which identifies all facilities to be developed over the next ten years with estimated development, maintenance and management costs, etc. RCC preferences and must

have's regarding any future development at the FG included preserving as much of the field habitat for pollinators (functional habitat not to be disturbed by other uses, such as parking) as well as the scenic view and historic character of the fields from Church Road. Maintaining the current trail system was also deemed important. Jerry B. recommended contracting a landscape architect to assist in preparing a site plan and that RCC take a balanced approach in assessing any future development of the FG.

Jerry B. will summarize RCC's responses to Eric D.'s questions and Marty H. will draft up bullets points for a comprehensive plan.

Meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Submitted by Andy Walsh on January XX, 2022