

Readfield Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, February 8, 2022

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

RCC Meeting Minutes – Greg D. motioned to approve the January 11, 2022 RCC meeting minutes with revisions; seconded by Bruce H.

New Business

On-site Meeting with Landscape Architect re. Proposed Ballfield – Representatives from the Trails, Recreation, Historical, and Conservation Committees met with Regina Leonard (RS Leonard Landscape Architecture) at the Fairgrounds property on Jan. 26 to introduce Regina to the site and to discuss the ballfield proposal and associated recreation development. Some rough ideas were preliminarily discussed, including options for shifting the ballfield to conserve more of the grassland. During RCC's meeting, Marty H. suggested that the field be managed to appear like a "pollinator park/garden." Andy W. recommended that RCC take a stronger role in managing the fields for pollinators and providing interpretive information at the kiosk to educate visitors about the ecological value of the field and the pollinators it supports. Siting of the proposed basketball court was discussed. Tentatively, Jerry B. is recommending that it be located adjacent to the northwest corner of the existing ballfield. The Select Board is estimating the cost for ballfield development at \$500,000. Funds for site evaluation and feasibility studies will likely be made available this year.

Open Space Fund – The Open Space fund currently has a balance of \$10,000. Eric D. (town manager) is recommending that \$50,000 be added this year and every year going forward until the account has \$500,000. Marty H. indicated that Eric D. is aware of several undeveloped properties in town that could be purchased in fee or easement for conservation.

Vernal Pool Project – Bruce H. spoke with Aram Calhoun (UMaine Professor of Wetland Ecology) regarding RCC's vernal pool data. Aram C. informed Bruce H. of the Maine vernal pool Special Area Management Plan (SAMP), which is an alternative mitigation tool approved by US Army Corps and ME DEP. SAMP streamlines development in growth areas, compensates rural land owners for vernal pool protection, provides increased predictability for developers, supports municipal goals for growth and rural areas, and allows strategic conservation of vernal pools at the landscape scale. Bruce H. will see if Aram C. can attend our next meeting.

DEP Map of Sludge Spreading Sites – Bruce H. presented a preliminary DEP map showing sites where leftover sludge (contaminated with PFAS chemicals) from wastewater plants may have been spread in Readfield and elsewhere in Maine.

Nearby sites where PFAS contaminated sludge may be present include the Hewitt property south of Rt. 17 and a field on the Jacobs Farm property on North Road.

Town Forest Harvest Update – Jerry B. indicated that tree harvesting was suspended for a week while a skidder was repaired. There's a couple more weeks of cutting to be done before the operation is complete.

Open Space Plan – Bruce H. deferred discussion except to say that Aram Calhoun (UMaine) suggested that the vernal pool map be included in the Comprehensive Plan.

Long Range Plan – hold discussion

Grassland Management – Bruce H. will contact both Laura Lecker and Brendan Fike regarding field mowing and frequency to enhance pollinator habitat.

Meeting adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Submitted by Andy Walsh on February 20, 2022