

Readfield Conservation Commission Minutes
Tuesday August 9, 2022, 6:30 pm via zoom w captions

Present: Jerry Bley, Greg Durgin, Martin Hanish, Bruce Hunter chair.

Excused: Andy Walsh, Stephanie Donaldson (membership status?)

Visiting: Megan LaChapelle (Trails Comm member), Tim Sniffen (taking notes)

Meeting opened with comments from Megan LaChapelle who is interested in starting a fairy garden project on a Town property. These are a popular activity in other Maine parks. Folks of all ages but especially children create small natural structures (fairy houses) using local materials in their natural setting. Ideal settings include a stream or pond shoreline. Torsey Pond Nature Preserve (TPNP) offers a perfect setting near the Orange Trail Spur where it opens at the shore. Megan described her project, stating it would encourage children and might bring more people onto our properties.

All RCC members were open to the idea, but had some comments and questions about the location:

- a) TPNP and the Fogg Farm area have conservation easements held by the Kennebec Land Trust (KLT) which protect their natural settings. Would scavenging for local building materials be appropriate in a nature preserve such as TPNP? Would it be allowed under their easements?
- b) There was concern about spring and summer insects. Deer flies can be severe at TPNP.
- c) Is water a necessary component? (It is an important part of folklore.)
- d) Fogg Farm has streams and is not heavily used. Would this draw more walkers to the property?
- e) The Fairgrounds might be a possibility. There was concern about vandalism.

RCC encouraged Megan to proceed looking into her idea. She will check with KLT about the easements, visit the Fogg Farm property, and report back to the RCC. She hopes to start the project on only one property.

Regular agenda:

Meeting minutes from July were referred to Sept for approval.

Town Forest work session –

There is some slash and debris along the north stretch of Loop B, left after the recent harvest. Trail is passable, but should be cleared, and probably can be done relatively quickly, preferably during cooler weather. Referred to Sept meeting for further planning.

Fairgrounds Field conservation –

RCC would like the Select Board to see the Fairgrounds milkweed, goldenrod, and other natural vegetation during the summer when it is serving butterflies, bees, and other pollinators. Jerry B suggested seeking a naturalist who could lead a site visit. He will ask Theresa Kershner of the KLT for suggestions. The visit should take place within the next month or six weeks.

Fairgrounds Ballfield proposal –

Although the original budget proposal did not pass at Town Meeting, parts of the proposal are reported to be on the agenda for the Select Board Retreat (Messenger schedules it for Monday August 22, 6:30 pm). RCC discussed giving input, especially the importance of following Management Plan procedures. Perhaps a letter to the Select Board would be appropriate at this point (Did we make further recommendations/decisions?)

Property concerns –

Fairgrounds: Trash has been found on trails and in parking lot. Trails Comm is also aware. This is not a major issue yet.

Options: Speak to parkers, install a film camera or lights, report to sheriff, trash can (who responsible for emptying/invitation for dumping?), wait and see if problem grows.

Town Forest:

- a) No new report on harvest receipts. Bruce H will check with Town Office.
- b) Jerry B will follow up with Forester Harold Burnett on pending road repair and Center Lane Trail improvement.
- c) Is there interest in asking Harold B to do an educational site visit to review last winter's harvest? We should be sure of adequate participation before asking him to do it. A Select Board decision?

Comprehensive Plan Revision –

Referred to Sept RCC meeting as a main agenda item. Bruce H will find out what is needed from RCC and let us know before our meeting. RCC members should give this some thought before the next meeting, Sept 13.

Miscellaneous –

Greg D announced that Berndt Heinrich will speak Sunday August 21, 4:00 pm, at the Union Meeting House. Title: "Birds I Have Known". Donation \$20.

August 21 is also the KLT Annual Meeting. Business session 12:30 pm, Camp Androscoggin, Wayne.

Meeting adjourned approx. 8:15 pm.

Submitted, Tim Sniffen