

Readfield Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, December 13, 2022

Present: Bruce Hunter, Jerry Bley, Jaaron Shaw, Greg Durgin, Marty Hanish, Linnea Koons, Andy Walsh

Absent: Stephanie Donaldson

Guest: Eric Dyer (Town Manager)

Meeting minutes – The November 8, 2022 meeting minutes were approved.

New Business

Carleton Pond Conservation Easement Purchase – Jerry B. reported no updates but said that he will contact KLT to discuss; KLT may take the lead or work jointly with RCC on this task.

Old Business

Select Board Meeting re. Fairgrounds Mowing Plan – Andy W. reported that SB members' responses to RCC's mowing plan to prioritize habitat and pollinators were largely positive. There was some concern with mowing timing/frequency potentially interfering with town activities (e.g., Trunk or Treat). It was also suggested that this type of plan be carried over to other town properties with fields (old landfill, TF). SB suggested possibly having a workshop in December with the RCC, someone from Trails, and Matt Seems (person mowing the Fairgrounds) to discuss goals and implementation.

Town Forest – Final issues worked out with Harold Burnett (Town Forester). Road repairs (rutting, etc.) near the Belz Road gate were completed by Leslie Pepper.

Transfer of Draper Property to New England Forestry Foundation (NEFF) will likely happen before the end of the end (2022). RCC may invite NEFF to a meeting to discuss future uses of the property. Protection of the Draper Property connects over 1,000 contiguous acres of conservation land.

RCC Budget – RCC members discussed budget needs for FY 2023-24. Among the items discussed for inclusion in the budget: no hunting signs for the Town Forest; trail signs for the Carleton property and Rosmarin Property, and a new kiosk at Torsey Pond N.P. Other items included: funds for invasive plant control on town properties (an assessment of invasive plants on the town properties will help determine needs and estimated costs) and vernal pool project (Bruce H. will finish the project this coming spring).

In an effort to soften tax impacts, Eric D. stated that any unexpended operating funds will not be carried over, but instead rolled into the General Fund. RCC's

Reserve Account will be carried over. If money in the General Fund is needed, then it can be requested via town warrant and put back in Reserve Account

Old Business

Fairgrounds Ballfield Restart – SB has a meeting scheduled for Dec. 14 to discuss how to improve the process of engaging all stakeholders for the next ballfield proposal. Jerry B. and Bruce H. will be attending the SB meeting.

A concept plan will likely be on the next warrant with funding coming from grants (LWCF, Harold Alfond Foundation?) and donations (in-kind); the project will have no tax ramifications. Construction in 2024-25, with an estimated cost of \$800K. Marty H. indicated that the ballfield proposal should be part of the Comprehensive Plan and that the Town should not give the impression that the project won't cost the town money. Marty H. also suggested that Town Meeting discuss large projects like the ballfield proposal to determine whether it's needed.

Comprehensive Plan –Greg D. stated that a meeting is scheduled for December 21, 2022 to review the first few chapters of the Comp Plan (including Recreation) and that there will be multiple public meetings in January and February for input. The Comp Plan will be completed in June and on the Town Meeting warrant in June (?). Eric D. would like to find a better way for committees (Recreation, Conservation, Trails) to collaborate. Eric D. wants separation between the Comp Plan and the ballfield proposal.

Landfill Evaluation for Pollinator Habitat – RCC briefly discussed steps to evaluate the landfill soils for plants to support pollinator species. Soil sampling and testing is necessary, per consultant (Lecker). Feasibility of increasing milkweed and plant diversity (bedstraw currently dominant?) is the primary goal if the landfill is to be managed for pollinators.

Meeting adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

Submitted by Andy Walsh on January 10, 2023