

Readfield Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, May 9, 2023

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

Absent:

Minutes for the April 11, 2023 meeting were approved by RCC without comments.

New Business

Open Space Discussion – RCC members initiated a general discussion on Open Space (OS) in light of a recent article in the Advertiser (April 29, 2023) by the Citizens for Common Sense & Integrity (CSI). RCC agreed that defining OS is critical to ensure that future discussions are using a consistent definition, especially when determining the area of protected OS that currently exists in Readfield. Jaaron S. indicated that EPA has a definition of OS, but that it does not include protected lands. Marty H. stated that the town has approximately 1300 acres of OS with some level of protection.

Jerry B. stated that taxpayer funding for OS should be transparent and that the warrant article should be a separate item. Marty H. stated that money is needed to maintain OS infrastructure (parking, kiosks, etc.) and agreed that the OS article should be a separate item on the warrant. It was noted that the Comp Plan surveys indicate that town residents value the existence and availability of OS for scenic and various recreational uses; a fact used to support OS funding. Linnea K. has the section of the Comp Plan showing the results of the town survey specific to OS. The survey results regarding OS were somewhat contradictory in that most respondents want the town to purchase OS, but also indicated the town has enough OS.

Jerry B. recommended highlighting what the town has done to date regarding OS: Torsey Pond Nature Preserve, ballfield on Fairgrounds property, tree harvesting at the Town Forest providing income to fund conservation projects, etc. The town also protects actively managed agricultural land (Kents Hill Orchard and Belle Vue Farm). It was also stated that the Fairgrounds property demonstrates a balanced approach toward the use of town conservation properties.

Meeting adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

Submitted by Andy Walsh on April 6, 2024