

Conservation Commission

Minutes

September 26, 2023

(An In-Person Meeting)

Attendance: David Miller, Chair, Ann Storer, Steve Cohn, Reed Pugh, Tom Boulay, Zeke Nims, Martha Hoyt, Elaine Vreeland, Administrator

Minutes: The minutes of September 12, 2023, and September 20, 2023 were read and approved.

Sachem Swamp: Discussion. Proposal to construct kiosk and trail.

- Rep: Naeve Bunting
- Information Presented: Girl Scout Gold Star Proposal

Naeve said that she had visited the site, seen debris and would like to remove it and construct a trail or boardwalk. David Miller thought that the proposal might be too much work, but Naeve said that she would be required to perform 80 hours or more of work, 30-50 of which would be community outreach. No trees are to be removed as the trail will meander. Steve Cohn thought a QR code and a website could be interesting. Naeve said that the project must be completed by September 2024. The kiosk will contain information on Native American history, and will provide information on geological changes over time. There followed some discussion regarding linking it to the Science Park at the Vinson Owen School. The matter was continued to October 10, 2023, with a site visit to be scheduled.

18 Sunset Road: Con't. Public Hearing, Notice of Intent. It was moved, seconded and approved by unanimous roll call vote to continue the hearing to Oct. 10, 2023, and to notify the applicant that that proposed addition and the resolution of the fence in the floodway issue must be addressed at the same time.

Budget Ideas: Discussion. David said that he, Tom and Martha have formed a subcommittee and are looking at ideas for future work. He added that more money may become available if the Community Preservation Act is adopted. He noted possibilities at The Vale Conservation Area, trails at Winning Farm, and improvements at Borregaard Beach. Zeke suggested that we request information from our land stewards, and Reed noted that a review of the Commission's annual income would be helpful. The discussion was continued to October 10, 2023

Fall Clean Up Day : Discussion. Scheduled for October 21, 2023, and to be located at Skillings Road on Judkins Pond. Martha will put up flyers and request volunteers. The Department of Public works will be requested to pick up brush at Skillings road and Woodside Road and Winter Pond.

9 Amberwood Drive: Discussion. Request for Certificate of Compliance. Elaine and David stated that they had reviewed the as-built information, had been to the site, and recommended that a Certificate of Compliance issue. It was moved, seconded, and approved by unanimous roll call vote to issue a Certificate of Compliance.

Elliot Park: Discussion. Reed noted that invasive plant removal had improved the view and had triggered an interest in further work by the neighbors. He said that he is looking to collect money for planting native plants and a wildflower mix along the edge of Wedge Pond.

Wedge Pond: Discussion. Elaine noted that VHB is currently studying historic and current conditions in the pond and will prepare a report to be released in spring of 2024. Neighbors have stated that they want more town money to be spent on water quality of this and other town ponds. There followed some discussion about an article on a town meeting warrant to fund it, and what it would take to build support. The Commission would have some input under the Conservation Commission Act which requires the Conservation Commission to promote the town's natural resources. Responsibility for this maintenance could then fall to the commission. Management of the ponds is now piecemeal, with volunteer groups or the Recreation Department taking responsibility. Funding for this project could come through the capital budget. It was noted that the Upper Mystic Lake, managed by the Department of Conservation and Recreation, receives funds for herbicide treatment from the Winchester Boat Club and the Friends of the Upper Mystic Lake. It was also noted in the Woburn Daily Times that 2023 town accounting shows a budget surplus.

In Person, Remote or Hybrid Meetings: Discussion. David noted that the remote meetings had gone reasonably well, although with some problems. He also noted that security measures to prevent interference were a time consuming and distracting. Reed stated that he did not wish to continue to use his personal account. Elaine noted that there is now more bandwidth and that we could use the town's account. Pre-registration and webinar formats are a security possibility. It would also be possible for the Conservation Commission to purchase its own account to host webinars, which would require the work of two people to manage. It was agreed that a hybrid meeting would be too much to manage. Conference calls were discussed, but disregarded because there would be no viewing of plans and other visuals, although an in-person meeting would allow people to phone in to comment or ask questions. Tom suggested that we record our meetings for future review, but David noted that there is no requirement to do so. Other options were explored such as using associate members, or a high school student to run the technological

aspects. Steve noted that much of what the Commission does is to negotiate or collaborate with applicants to bring a project into compliance with the regulations, and so favored in-person meetings. It was agreed that the Commission would meet in person in the near future.

Troop 507 Eagle Scout Projects: Discussion. It was noted that the troop is looking for ideas, and that we should invite them to a meeting to discuss possibilities.

Housing Partnership Board: David noted that no one had expressed interest in being the next representative, so he will look to get the Commission removed from the list of participants.

Submitted by:

Elaine Vreeland