

Minutes
Conservation Commission
October 24, 2024

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

Minutes: The minutes of October 10, 2023, were read and approved.

Town Forest: Discussion. There was a request from Leo Arone, Eagle Scout applicant, as to whether the Commission would like to see the construction of another kiosk, located at West Chardon Road. Members approved the idea, added that the base should be no more than 4' from the ground, and requested to see the specifications before it is built.

There followed discussion regarding information to be posted, and it was agreed it should consist of the Conservation Area rules, Winchester Trails information and map, and a copy of the Conservation logo. Members also wanted to see a "You are here" mark on the trails map, and marks indicating where other kiosks are located. There followed some discussion regarding geocaching, virtual reality use and QR code as future possibilities, on this and other kiosk locations at Sucker Brook and Smith Pond.

18 Sunset Road: Public Hearing Notice of Intent. It was moved seconded and approved by unanimous roll call vote to open the hearing and continue it to November 14, 2023.

Lynch School: Discussion. Members reviewed a letter from Nitsche Engineering, stating that further study into the project had resulted in a scour analysis finding that the installation of the bridge abutments would result in bank scouring which could be resolved by adding permanent rip rap armament. Members requested a construction plan, the scour study, and a statement on impact to wildlife habitat. They looked at the purpose, impact and scope of the proposed change, and determined that it will require an Amended Order of Conditions.

34 Leslie Road: Request for Certificate of Compliance. Elaine reported that the proposed landscaping, which had previously prevented a full Certificate, would not be installed, and that therefore, all work under the Order of Conditions had been completed. It was moved, seconded, and approved by unanimous roll call vote to issue a full Certificate of Compliance.

18 Forest Street: Request for Certificate of Compliance. Elaine reported that all work had been satisfactorily completed. It was moved, seconded, and approved by unanimous roll call vote to issue a Certificate of Compliance.

25 Cambridge Street: Request for Extension Permit. The applicant presented information that more time would be needed to install the driveway. It was moved, seconded, and approved by all members except Steve Cohn (who abstained) to issue an extension to January 9, 2024.

Judkins Pond: Discussion. Fall Invasives Cleanup Day at the pond. It was noted that a good number of volunteers had participated, and that a good number of invasive species had been removed from Skillings Road and the Bike Path.

Davidson Park: Discussion. It was noted that the existing Eversource landscaping plan raised issues regarding density, encroachment on the grassed area, and lack of viewsheds. Given these issues, it was suggested that Eversource make a donation to a Conservation fund equal to the amount of the deferred planting schedule for the cost of landscaping, which would be banked for a later date to implement the revised plan. It was also noted that the town had looked at the restoration plan for the entire park, and how this plan could be integrated. Talks with the Town Manager indicated that she would be amenable to abandoning the proposed dredging in favor of allowing the river to find its course, and landscaping both sides of the river. It was noted that there is an article on the Town Meeting warrant, which, if approved, would provide \$50,000 town for use. That money, plus a proposal for \$30,000 from Eversource, could then be used to approach NRD, (which is holding money for wildlife habitat restoration pursuant to a Superfund settlement), to release \$500,00 for design and habitat restoration. Attendee Town Meeting member Meredith Crowley stated that she believed that this possibility would meet with the approval of the neighborhood. The discussion was continued to November 14, 2023.

Locke Farm Pond Conservation Area: Discussion. Proposed Eagle Scout project. Scout Leo Gordon requested an opinion as to whether plastic support for the boardwalk could be used at the site. Members determined that this would be suitable material for the project.

248 Forest Street: Discussion. Elaine requested an opinion as to whether a proposed pervious paver patio less than 500SF would require Commission review. Members stated that the town's trigger for stormwater review is 500SF, and that if a project would not trigger town review, the Commission would not require a filing.

Cultural District Update: Discussion. Tom has not decided whether he will take Reed's place as the Commission's representative. The matter was continued to November 14, 2023.

Flood Regulation and Jurisdiction: Discussion. David spoke regarding a letter the Engineering Department sent to residents living in the floodplain, detailing their rights and obligations under the Federal Emergency Management Act. He said that he would follow up with Engineering to include some matters important to Conservation a revised letter.

Budget: Discussion. David said that he had spoken with the Town Comptroller Stacie Ward regarding the Commission's budget, which consists of the operating budget, which funds office expenses, and the capital budget, used for extraordinary expenses, and requires Town Meeting approval. He noted that only the Conservation Department can submit a budget request, and asked Commission members to provide ideas for funding, such as trail construction and pond management. The matter was continued to November 14, 2023.

Pond Management: Discussion. David said that he had spoken to Town Manager Beth Rudolph about the Commission taking a greater role in managing the town's ponds. He wants the Commission to act as a clearing house and repository for information regarding water quality. Beth spoke of the past studies and work currently funded, and agreed to a future meeting with other departments. David also noted that someone had expressed interest in serving as a water quality volunteer.

Volunteers: Discussion. David said that he had written a document to be posted on the Commission's website page describing jobs for volunteers. Items included:

- web site developer,
- map preparation, using GIS based maps displaying conservation areas and trails,
- preparing information to be displayed on conservation area kiosks,
- pond steward to assemble a database on town ponds,
- legal contract assistance for bylaw, regulations, and Conservation Restriction updates.

10 Converse Place Update: Discussion. It was noted that the Applicant and the town had agreed to in a Joint Motion to Stay proceedings under the bylaw appeal until such time as a decision had been made under the Wetlands Protection Act, as that decision could impact the bylaw appeal.

Submitted by: Elaine Vreeland