


[Site Search](#)
[RESIDENTS](#)
[BUSINESSES](#)
[VISITORS](#)
[HISTORY](#)
[Home Page](#)
[About Stow](#)
[Minutes & Agendas](#)
[Department & Boards](#)
[How Do I...?](#)
[Town Calendars](#)
[Town Documents](#)
[Council on Aging](#)
[Recreation Department](#)
[Stow Public Schools](#)
[Public Safety](#)
[Library](#)
[Stow TV](#)
[Opportunities](#)
[Town Meeting & Election](#)
[Online Tax Payments](#)
[Subscribe to News](#)
[Send Us Comments](#)

Conservation Commission Minutes 04/04/17

[Printer-Friendly Version](#)

Stow Conservation Commission Minutes April 4, 2017

A meeting of the Stow Conservation Commission was held at the Stow Town Building, 380 Great Road, Stow, Massachusetts, on April 4, 2017 at 7:30 in the evening.

There were present: Andy Snow, Chair
Serena Furman, Vice-Chair
Cortni Frecha
Jeff Saunders
Sandra Grund

Absent: Ingeborg Hegemann Clark
Doug Morse

comprising a quorum of the Commission

Also present: Kathy Sferra, Conservation Coordinator
Jacquelyn Goring, Conservation Assistant
Nicki McGachey, Associate

The Conservation Commission meeting was called to order at 7:30 PM.

Minutes: *Serena Furman made a motion to approve the minutes of March 21, 2017 as amended. Sandra Grund seconded the motion and it was passed unanimously.*

Coordinator's Report

220 Barton Road: Sferra coordinated a meeting with Building Department staff, Board of Health staff, and the team volunteering to complete the permitting work for the Schultz family, residents of 220 Barton Road. Steve Poole of Lakeview Engineering will be assisting with the wetlands permitting. The Commission discussed and agreed upon a waiver for the bylaw fee for the Schultz family due to the extreme hardship.

Request for Determination of Applicability – Continued Hearing – Stow Conservation Department – Town-wide Knotweed Project – The Commission re-opened the hearing. Kathy Sferra, Stow Conservation Coordinator, represented the Conservation Department. Sferra reviewed the changes requested by the Commission including requiring knotweed patches to be staked before treatment. Sferra also discussed the Commission's concerns about vernal pools and included in the revised permit that herbicide treatment should only occur during July through October, when herbicides will work most efficiently to eradicate knotweed and outside of the breeding season for species using vernal pools. Sferra also included that applications could be rejected if the knotweed patch is near sensitive areas and included a check box for certified and potential vernal pools. Sferra clarified that the application would not apply to areas within Priority/Estimated Habitat for Rare Species.

Sferra informed the Commission that she was contacted by Judy Schmitz, Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Central Region Circuit Rider, regarding the filing. Schmitz informed Sferra that she had reviewed the filing and would be more comfortable if a Notice of Intent (NOI) was submitted rather than a Request for Determination of Applicability (RDA) for reasons of enforceability. Schmitz noted that DEP may appeal if the Commission issues a Determination of Applicability but does not want to do that. Sferra proposed that the Commission withdraw the RDA and that staff file a NOI. The Commission discussed withdrawing the RDA and recommended filing a NOI and including an additional disclaimer in the permit for homeowners regarding the use of herbicides. The Commission also recommended the permit include information about the proper disposal of knotweed. Sferra noted staff plans to create a webpage with information about knotweed including how to treat and dispose of the plant and suggestions on replanting. *Serena Furman made a motion to withdraw the Request for Determination of Applicability. Sandra Grund seconded and it was passed unanimously.*

Appointment – Laura Diamond – Proposal for Bench at Town Forest – Residents Laura Diamond and Carolyn McDonald were present to discuss a proposed bench at Town Forest. Diamond and McDonald would like to donate money to the Commission to have benches put at the top of Gardner Hill on an unmarked trail and noted that there is a large rock to sit on there now. Diamond added that a conservation property in Concord has benches in a circle that are an attractive example of benches on conservation land. Diamond and McDonald would also like to have a plaque on a "heart tree" they have found to encourage visitors to look up at the branches that form a heart. The Commission thanked Diamond and McDonald for meeting with them and for offering to fund benches at Town Forest. The Commission noted that they have not had similar offers in the past and do not have a policy on how to deal with bench donations.

The Commission described the current projects at Town Forest and potential changes to the trail network. The Commission added that any consideration of placing benches must be done thoughtfully and the gifts must be placed on marked trails. The Commission added that benches may be better suited for areas such as the proposed Town Center Park. The Commission also informed Diamond and McDonald that the Commission had previously begun discussing accepting gifts on conservation land and many Commission members had varying opinions on the style of benches or if they are appropriate at all in natural areas. The Commission reiterated that donations of benches, plaques or other gifts on conservation land must match the goals of the Commission. Diamond informed the Commission that the heart tree is not on a marked trail. Sferra provided a map of Town Forest and the Commission discussed the locations of the colored marked trails as well as the extensive amount of unmarked, unmaintained trails. Diamond suggested that the proposed benches could be installed by Eagle Scouts. Diamond and McDonald also inquired about the dog regulations and dog waste issues. The Commission provided Diamond and McDonald with the regulations and explained why there are not trash cans for dog waste and other trash.

The Commission thanked Diamond and McDonald again and discussed completing the Town Forest Mapping project and the need to determine if benches are appropriate. Diamond noted she would provide a photo of the benches in Concord for reference. Diamond added that SVT has a lot of experience with benches and is amenable to their donation of benches on their properties. McDonald thanked the Commission for their time and hard work.

Work Session/Discussion



Stow, MA

79 °F

Clear

at 11:56 AM



[Click for Forecast](#)

- **Japanese Knotweed Eradication Project:** Sferra provided the Commission a proposal for a knotweed eradication project including an article in the town wide issue of the Stow Independent and a table at Spring Fest. At Spring Fest there will be examples of the plant, a town wide map showing all the parcels in Stow where homeowners could color in their property if it has or does not have knotweed to show the visual extent of knotweed in Stow. The Commission recommended that there be a signup sheet at Spring Fest for residents who want more information and to show photos before and after treatment at Captain Sargent. Sferra also noted that a webpage will be created with more information about knotweed for homeowners.
- **Nonpoint Source Pollution/MS4 Permitting:** Sferra informed the Commission that there are new EPA permits that apply to Massachusetts which will require all municipalities to provide more ambitious nonpoint source pollution control programs. Under the new permit more information is needed on how communities are going to meet the new requirements and there will be more enforcement of the requirements than in the past. The new permitting will require an mapping of catchment areas to outfalls. The new permit will be interdisciplinary and will not only affect Conservation Commissions but Planning Boards and Highway Departments. Sferra provided the Commission with handouts from a recent Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) meeting which she attended. Sferra added that in Stow about half the town is subject to the new permit and Stow additionally has impaired waterways including the Assabet River and Lake Boon which will require more effort to be in compliance with the new permitting. The deadline for the new permit is October 1, 2017 and it is anticipated that Conservation staff will be participating in the effort to complete the permit. MAPC has received a grant to provide technical assistance to communities within their region (including Stow) including the recent workshop and plan to have concrete products to provide to help in the permit process.
- **Town Forest 50th Anniversary:** Sferra provided initial plans for a yearlong celebration for the 50th Anniversary of Town Forest including a fall walk to see the fen hosted by Ingeborg Hegemann Clark, an annual New Year's Day walk, a Spring Fest exhibit in 2018 and additional events. The Commission reviewed and discussed the list of events which will be spread out throughout the year and capped off by an actual celebration of the 50th Anniversary.

Cortni Frecha arrived at 9:05 PM.

Coordinator's Report - Continued

- **Box Mill Road Bridge:** Sferra has been working with Planning staff, Highway staff and the Historical Commission to discuss the proposed Box Mill Bridge replacement. The Historical Commission had previously sent a letter to MassDOT stating that the bridge was historical and should not be removed. Staff met with MassDOT to review proposed plans for the bridge replacement which include leaving the existing bridge in place to be maintained by the Town and building a new road and bridge. Sferra will continue to work with Planning staff, Highway staff, the Historical Commission and MassDOT on the bridge plans and will update the Commission throughout the process.
- **Tree Cutting Violation – West Acton Road:** Sferra and Goring conducted a site visit on West Acton Road where a tree had been cut within the Commission's jurisdiction by New England Tree Masters without a permit. Sferra issued a minor project approval during the site visit to the homeowner for the tree removal of one tree that was dead and threatening the house. Sferra spoke with the same employee of New England Tree Master that she spoke with on Weldon Lane and confirmed the owner of New England Tree Masters had not talked to his staff yet about work with the Commission's jurisdiction. The Commission discussed the issue of New England Tree Masters repeatedly doing work within their jurisdiction without permits and requested that Sferra contact the owner and inform him that if the issue occurs again staff will stop work and issue a fine.
- **Town Forest Walk:** The Commission agreed to walk the trails at Town Forest sometime in late May to early June. Sferra will send around a doodle pole with potential dates to the Commission.
- **Randall Road Potential Vernal Pool:** Serena Furman has agreed to show residents Bob and Gay McDonald how to certify a vernal pool on their property.
- **Dog Incident – Town Forest:** Sferra and Animal Control Officer Phyllis Tower encountered a Town Forest visitor with eight dogs. Sferra and Tower informed the dog owner that the regulations for all Stow Conservation Commission property only allow two dogs per adult. Staff is continuing to hand out flyers with the regulations and getting mostly positive feedback.

Cortni Frecha recused herself at 9:18 PM

Forest Cutting Plan – Frecha Property, Boxboro Road – The Commission reviewed the Forest Cutting Plan for the Frecha property which includes tree cutting around the pond on property while leaving a 50' filter strip around the pond. The area will be thinned and standing trees will remain. Sferra confirmed that the back areas shown on the plan will not be accessed by machinery and will be cut by hand. The Commission confirmed there are no vernal pools in the area. The purpose of the cutting is both for firewood and to promote the health and regrowth of the forest on the property as a part of a long term management plan. *Serena Furman made a motion to approve the Forest Cutting Plan for the Frecha property. Sandra Grund seconded and it was passed unanimously.*

Cortni Frecha returned at 9:25 PM.

Request for Extension/Approval of Maintenance Tree/Shrub Work – Order #299-501 off Barton Road – Bob Collings – Sferra confirmed with DEP that they have no issues with the Commission issuing a three year extension for the maintenance tree and shrub work. Collings contacted Sferra inquiring if a site visit was necessary before the work began. Sferra will work with Collings to schedule a site visit prior to the maintenance tree and shrub work. *Cortni Frecha made a motion to extend Order of Conditions #299-501 for maintenance tree/shrub work until April 4, 2020. Sandra Grund seconded and it was passed unanimously.*

Vote on Annual Town Meeting Warrant Articles – The Commission reviewed and discussed the draft Annual Town Meeting Warrant articles. Frecha reported on the concurrent Finance Committee meeting Warrant article discussion which she had attended. *Serena Furman made a motion to support the Annual Town Meeting Warrant articles. This included the articles for Carver Hill, Small Farm, Town Center Park, and the Commission's three financial transfer articles. Sandra Grund seconded and it was passed unanimously.*

Commission Member Report – Andy Snow noted significant ponding on the 45 Walcott Street property and surrounding properties which was running into the roadway.

Adjournment – *Cortni Frecha made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:45 PM. Serena Furman seconded the motion and it was passed unanimously.*

Respectfully submitted,

Jacquie Goring
Conservation Assistant

Materials Used during April 4, 2017 Conservation Commission Meeting:

- Town Forest Map
- 4/4/17 Agenda
 - 4/4/17 Meeting and Coordinator's Report
 - Draft 3/21/17 Minutes
 - Frecha property Forest Cutting Plan and maps
 - Draft 2017 Annual Town Meeting Warrant Articles
 - Email correspondence with Laura Diamond
 - Board of Selectmen's Guidelines for the Acceptance of Gifts
 - Draft Conservation Land Honorary and Memorial Gift Guidelines, Town of Stow Conservation Commission
 - Presentation handouts from MAGIC Stormwater Partnership MS4 Permit meeting
 - Town Forest 50th Anniversary Celebration Event Brainstorming
 - Handouts from the OARS/SVT Legislative Breakfast
 - Town of Stow Pilot Japanese Knotweed Control Program RDA Narrative and application
 - Knotweed project list and draft Stow Independent article

Stow Town Building 380 Great Road, Stow, MA 01775

Phone: (978) 897-4514 Fax: (978) 897-4534

[Website Disclaimer](#)

Virtual Towns & Schools Website