

Stow Conservation Commission
Minutes
December 5, 2017

A meeting of the Conservation Commission was held at the Stow Town Building 380, Great Road, Stow, Massachusetts, on December 5 at 7:30 in the evening.

There were present: Andy Snow, Chair
 Serena Furman, Vice-Chair
 Cortni Frecha
 Nicki McGachey
 Sandra Grund
 Ingeborg Hegemann Clark

Comprising a quorum of the Commission

Also Present: Kathy Sferra, Conservation Coordinator

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

Boon Road South Agricultural Preservation Restriction

Kathy Sferra presented the Boon Road South Agricultural Preservation Restriction to the Commission for approval and to be executed. Kathy Sferra explained that once the document is executed and the Commission votes to approve payment, it will be submitted to the State.

Ingeborg Hegemann moved to approve and execute the Boon Road South Agricultural Preservation Restriction as described in the document presented. The motion was seconded by Serena Furman and carried by a unanimous vote.

Cornti Frecha moved to approve the \$150,000.00 payment for the Boon Road South Agricultural Preservation Restriction. The motion was seconded by Nicky McGachey and carried by a unanimous vote.

The document was then executed before Notary Public Linda Hathaway.

Minutes – November 19, 2017 Meeting

Ingeborg Hegemann Clark moved to approve the minutes of the November 19, 2017 meeting as amended. The motion was seconded by Nicky McGachey and carried by a unanimous vote.

Karen & David Gray – 12 Pine Point Road

(Request for Certificate of Compliance/Plan Amendment)

Karen and David Gray of 12 Pine Point Road met with the Commission to discuss their request for Certificate of Compliance. The Commission asked them to attend the meeting due to the observation of a path being built leading to the lake that was not included in the Notice of Intent or Order of Conditions. Commissioners reviewed a letter and photographs that were provided by the Grays.

Serena Furman explained her concerns that in the original plan there was no description of the pathway and the step-off from the deck. She is concerned that the path is not yet complete and therefore erosion could occur. Mr. Gray explained they want to put in three or four timbers to stabilize the path and hopes to get it done soon before the ground freezes. Serena suggested allowing them to finish the path and call for an inspection once complete, at which time they should be ready for a Certificate of Compliance. The Commission agreed.

Coordinator's Report

Kathy Sferra updated the Commission on ongoing activities in the Conservation Department.

- She reminded the Commission of the site visit for Stow Acres scheduled for Saturday at 10:00 am.
- Kathy had a pre-application meeting with Scott Hayes of Foresite Engineering and Planning Department Staff concerning Gates Lane. The concept plan shows 30 lots, which they are planning to cluster with the main access out to Great Road.
- Kathy received Dave Crossman's first set of photos for the Collings Foundation monitoring. She noted that some of the things the Commission identified at the site visit have not been done. Kathy will follow up with them.

FY19 Budget

Kathy Sferra presented the FY2019 Budget, which is level funded from last year with the exception of a 2% salary increase in line with the Town Administrator's recommendation and the addition of \$100.00 to cover Kathy's pesticide license.

With regard to the Conservation Trust Fund Article, Kathy explained that the Commission typically asks for \$10,000.00. Kathy explained that the only other source of income is from the Community Garden plot fees and some earned interest. The funds are limited to land acquisition and conservation land maintenance. The Commission acknowledged that the overall town budget will be very tight this year due to things outside of the Commission's jurisdiction and discussed whether the Commission is in the position to make an effort to help by reducing the request to \$5,000. After reviewing the existing balance and known anticipated expenses, the Commission agreed to request \$10,000.

Ingeborg Hegemann Clark moved to approve the budget as submitted. The Motion was seconded by Sandra Grund and carried by a unanimous vote.

Town Forest Trail Master Plan – Preliminary Staff Recommendations

Kathy Sferra and Bruce Trefry presented the work that has been done to date on the Town Forest Trail Master Plan. Staff wanted to give the Commission an opportunity for feedback and discussion before reaching out for public comment. Once they have a proposal that the Commission is comfortable with, Kathy recommended that all trail users be invited to comment on a draft Plan. Kathy described a list of 10 goals:

1. Balance visitor use with resource protection
2. Ensure decision do not foster user conflicts
3. Mark and maintain additional trails for all users where appropriate
4. Close trails that parallel existing trails (i.e. duplicative) and/or fragment habitat in sensitive areas
5. Maintain unfragmented blocks of habitat where feasible
6. Reduce potential for abutter trespass
7. Create a redesigned trail network that is easy for users to navigate

8. Educate users regarding creation/use of unauthorized trails
9. Maintain current use regulations
10. Implement through a phased approach

Kathy presented maps showing official trails, unofficial trails, and natural resource areas,

Staff is recommending five action items:

1. Extension and relocation of the White Trail
2. New marked Purple Trail that would go to the summit of Gardner Hill
3. Extension of the marked Yellow trail into the Rising/Cohen Land recently conveyed to SCT
4. Expanded Red Loop, contingent on Carver Hill CR acquisition
5. Creating some quiet reflection trails for pedestrians only.

The trail map is designed so that every loop will be served by the blue trail or the white trail and to provide three possible short reflection trails, one by Elizabeth Brook beginning near the Bradley Lane entrance and trails that go to each side of the fen. These would be for pedestrians only (no dogs, horses or bikes). One goal here is to serve the people who want to be away from dogs when they walk.

The Commission discussed the proposal to designate new trails and close off some of the existing unmarked and unmaintained trails. The Commission asked how the trails will be closed. Bruce Trefry noted that they have been handling trail closures informally to date and said that in order to effectively close a trail, you need a large enough barrier and enough corridor either side, as well as signage to educate users. Some recent work at Captain Sargent in this regard has been effective to date.

A Commissioner discussed observations at other properties (National Seashore and Hopkinton State Park) with signage that says “What grows by the inch dies by the foot” and has also seen a more extreme measure such as a split rail fence with a sign on it.

A Commissioner said it would be nice to have a few narrow paths in the mix.

It was noted that one of the biggest issues will be limiting some trails from dog walkers.

Commissioners like the idea of reflective trails and noted that those trails could be designated as quiet trails which might steer dog walkers away.

Allan Fierce asked about cross country skiing would be allowed on the reflection trails. It was noted that DCR properties prohibit cross country skiing and only allows snow shoes. This will need additional consideration.

A resident asked why the maps show a gap in the AT&T trail. It was noted that it is not part of the trail system, although they are not proposing to close it. It could be included but it is not necessary for the loop.

Margie Lynch said she thinks about the reflection trails as maintaining an experience and designing around a natural feature. Interpretive signage could be used. She suggested providing parallel options or one way trails.

Allan Fierce asked about timing – how long will implementation take? He is eager to move this forward. Kathy Sferra said she hopes to begin this winter.

Greg Jackson questioned if there is an existing conflict with mountain bikers they are trying to address. Commissioners noted they have seen mountain bike damage on trails. The intent is not to target bikers, but to provide for all users. He feels the mountain bikers will be losing a lot of trails with this proposal. He also noted that mountain bikers prefer small trails. Bruce Trefry said when he is out doing work he gets complaints about bikes from people with dogs, and about dogs from people with bikes. It was noted that the Commission needs to get the message across about the trails proposed to be closed. He also said the Commission should get the message across that the trail closings are for trails that were never officially open.

Review of Intermittent vs Perennial Stream Requirements

Kathy provided information on Intermittent vs. Perennial Stream Requirements for the Commission to review and become familiar with because the issue came up during the Public Hearing for Stow Acres.

Ingeborg Hegemann Clark left the meeting.

Eversource Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR)

Kathy reported that comments on the Eversource Draft Environmental Impact Report are due this week. She said they did a good job documenting the construction sequence and impacts in the document. They will be filing with the Commission after the EIR process is complete. Kathy asked if the Commission wanted to submit additional comments. The Commission agreed it was best to wait for the Stow Notice of Intent filing. Serena Furman asked about the width of clearing. Kathy read a description from the DEIR. They said with the initial construction, the clearing will be generally 22' and up to 30' limit of disturbance (where they have the duct banks) in some at select areas. Some areas (not in Stow) will be reduced to 18'. She said the summary table indicates alternation of 13,794 sq. ft. of disturbance in the initial DEIR and the current is 7,350 sq. ft. The permanently cleared area will be up to DCR for the bike trail.

Executive Session pursuant to MGL Chapter 30A, Section 21A(6)

Serena Furman recused herself and left the meeting.

Cortni Frecha moved to go into executive session for the purpose of discussing a real estate matter and not to return to regular session at the conclusion of executive session. The motion carried by a unanimous roll call vote (Andy Snow, Serena Furman, Cortni Frecha, and Nicki McGachey)

Respectfully Submitted,

Karen Kelleher