

Conservation Committee Meeting Minutes
Cape Elizabeth Town Hall
7:00 p.m., Tuesday, January 9, 2024

Present: Corinne Ketcham, Chair, Michelle Boyer, Matt Craig, Emily Helliesen Day, Stacey Dietsch, Bruce Moore, Richard Sullivan.

Staff: Maureen O'Meara, Town Planner

1. Call to Order. Chair Ketcham called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.
2. Election of Officers. Mr. Sullivan nominated Matt Craig to serve as Chair, seconded by Mr. Moore, and Mr. Craig was elected Chair by a vote of 7-0. Mr. Sullivan nominated Corinne Ketcham to serve as Vice-Chair, seconded by Mr. Moore, and Ms. Ketcham was elected by a vote of 7-0.
3. Citizen Comments.

Jay Weiss, Cape Nordic Club – He is helping to groom the Nordic trails at Gull Crest and hopes to get the snowmobile back soon (parts are on order for repairs). He wants to do maintenance on the trails and cut back invasives on the “John Morton” loop. The loop was developed in 2006, and sides have since grown in with invasives like honeysuckle, bittersweet and multiflora rose.

Ms. Boyer asked Mr. Weiss to identify the sections under discussion. Ms. Ketcham asked how the invasives will be disposed of? Mr. Weiss said they will be thrown back into the woods.

Chair Craig asked when the work will be done. Mr. Weiss wanted to do it a month ago, and now will do it over the winter. Lots of invasives are thriving.

Ms. Ketcham suggested that since it is winter, the full review/ permit for invasives removal is not needed and we don't want to further invasive blooms.

Mr. Moore made a motion to grant permission for proposed work, seconded by Mr. Ketcham and the motion passed 7-0.

Mr. Weiss described the second maintenance issue, which is a boardwalk which has been built on the Morton loop and hampers Nordic skiing. There is lumber for more construction and he does not want to tear up boardwalks during snowmobile grooming.

The committee discussed solutions such as flipping the boardwalk out of the way or skiing around it. Chair Craig summarized the challenge that when Nordic trails are not groomed, there is little snow and muddy conditions. The Committee consensus is to

designate the Morton loop as a Nordic skiing priority and not make improvements inconsistent with Nordic use.

Mr. Weiss described the third issue, which is a root ball from a fallen tree nearly blocking the trail. The committee agreed to do a site visit on Thursday, January 18th beginning at 10:45 at Gull Crest, meeting next to the tower trail to look at the root ball and the boardwalk in question.

4. Minutes. The minutes of the December 12, 2023 meeting were approved 7-0.
5. FOAA Training. The committee received annual training on compliance with FOAA.
6. Budget. The committee discussed the current balance in the FY 2024 budget, pending costs and expected expenditure needs for FY 2025. Staff said that tree work is estimated at \$10,000 annually. The committee would like to get an estimate for improvements to the Winnick Woods parking lot and erosion at the trail head. The committee has committed to the Cross Hill machine-built trail project. Ms. Dietsch made a motion to request funding in FY 2025 in the amount of \$30,000 plus \$10,000, seconded by Ms. Day and the motion passed 7-0. Staff will notify the committee when the Town Council budget workshop will be held.
7. Greenbelt Management.

Easement Monitoring. Ardath Dixon, CELT Stewardship Manager, reviewed the annual monitoring report for the Town Farm and Cross Hill open space. There remain several encroachments on Cross Hill open space. The Conservation Committee agreed to send a letter to all property owners where encroachments have been identified, to be signed by Chair Craig.

Chair Craig noted that CELT has an open space map showing where hunting is allowed. A similar map for town owned property should be developed.

Town Farm. Following the easement monitoring, Ms. Dixon asked for permission to add the Town Farm to the Earth Day Clean-up, which was enthusiastically granted.

Ms. Boyer asked about installing a trash can at the Town Farm to address trash. There was concern about taking on responsibility to empty the trash can. Chair Craig asked Ms. Dixon if CELT would consider taking responsibility for a pet waste station at Town Farm, as CELT is already collecting pet waste at other properties.

Ms. Dixon also wants permission to install a CELT sign on its Sawyer Marsh property, but is unsure of the property line with the town. The committee agreed that the sign can be installed [and might inadvertently end up on town land] if CELT uses its best effort to install the sign on CELT property.

The committee directed staff to reach out to the Cumberland County Soil and Water Conservation District (CCSWCD) for a proposal to address erosion at Winnick Woods by a vote of 7-0.

Town Farm Trail rerouting. Committee members and the town planner visited the Town Farm on Friday, December 15th at 8:00 a.m. to evaluate options for mitigating muddy conditions on a portion of trail near the marsh. Committee members proposed relocating a portion of trail about 75' upland, and relocate the existing boardwalk to align with the trail if needed. The existing trail location will be roped off to revegetate, and the committee would like an explanatory sign posted, along the lines of "we're letting this go back to nature."

Gazette. Ms. Boyer would like the Morton trail loop map included in the gazette, as well as a reminder to walk on the side of the trail only. A call for a new donation of a snowmachine can be included. Volunteer recognition, potentially with action pictures, should be included.

8. Next meeting. The committee reviewed the 2024 meeting schedule and approved it provisional that it is committee practice to cancel either the July or August meeting. The schedule is subject to changes. The next meeting of the committee will be February 13th. The meeting adjourned at 9:04 p.m.