

Conservation Committee Meeting Minutes
Remote
7:00 p.m., Tuesday, January 11, 2022

Public proceedings by remote access for Town Council meetings are authorized by the Town of Cape Elizabeth's Remote Participation Policy adopted August 30, 2021 and the Order Declaring a Limited Emergency extended to March 31, 2022.

Present: Jim Tasse, Chair, Emily Helliesen Day, Chris De Vries, Corinne Ketcham, Bruce Moore, Richard Sullivan.

Staff: Maureen O'Meara, Town Planner

1. Election of Officers. Ms. O'Meara opened the meeting and asked the committee to nominate a chair. She also recommended that the committee designate an unofficial vice chair so that staff is not leading the committee in the absence of a chair. Ms. Ketcham nominated Jim Tasse to be Chair, seconded by Ms. Day. No more nominations were received. A roll call vote was taken supporting the nomination by a vote of 5 0-1 (Tasse). Chair Tasse then asked for nominations for Vice Chair. Chair Tasse nominated Ms. Ketcham, seconded by Mr. DeVries. No further nominations were made and Ms. Ketcham was approved as vice-chair by a vote of 5 -0-1 (Ketcham).
2. Committee introductions. Mr. Sullivan introduced himself as a new member who has hiked town trails and donated a trail next to his house. Committee members introduced themselves and welcomed Mr. Sullivan.
3. Citizen comments. Ms. O'Meara clarified that, according the committee's public comment rules, this public comment period is for both items on and not on the agenda. This would be the time for the board to commit to holding additional public comment periods for items later in the agenda or allowing folks to comment now. Chair Tasse asked for public comment.

Dan Daucause, 5 Fernwood Ln - He attended the May, 2021 meeting to propose invasives removal in Dyer Woods, where a low level infestation has occurred on the edge of the preserved forest. He is unsure how to handle volunteers, structure the work and the control/monitor process so the committee tabled this to the end of the 2021. He did monitor the meeting where you had a similar request and discussion about invasives located at Littlejohn Rd.

The committee agreed to set aside time to talk about invasives at the March 2022 meeting. It would help if Mr. Daucause can bring a plan with actionables for the committee to discuss.

No other members of the public wished to speak.

4. Minutes. The committee approved the December 14, 2021 minutes by a vote of 6-0.

5. Meeting logistics. Ms. O'Meara reviewed FOAA requirements and encouraged members to complete the self-certification, sign the form and return it to her or Town Clerk Deb Lane. Conservation Committee members are not required by state law to certify, but it is good practice and 2 members have already submitted their certification. She reviewed that the committee should allow public comment at each meeting per town policy and the time allowed for public comment can be limited to allow the committee time to complete its work.

She noted that some decisions must be by vote, such as recommendations to the Planning Board about Resource Protection permits and funding recommendations. Formal motions are not always needed, but are a good way to make a clear record of committee decisions.

The committee decided last year to receive all meeting materials digitally. Does this still work? The committee agreed to continue the practice.

All committee meeting materials are posted on the town website under the meetings calendar. This is a good reference spot for members and the public. The agenda includes the zoom meeting id information, so you can use that to attend a meeting.

The committee reviewed the draft committee meeting schedule. It is good practice to have a regular schedule that makes it easier for the public to attend. The committee noted that November 8th is election day, but will still hold a meeting. Ms. Day noted that the committee usually cancels a summer meeting. Meetings will be shown for now, but the committee will look at cancelling a summer meeting depending on workload. The meetings calendar was approved 6-0.

6. Greenbelt Trails Management.

Nordic Trail. The committee will continue discussion of adding signage Nordic skiing signage. Ms. O'Meara noted the revised "in-house" sign and Mr. De Vries likes the town sign.

Chair Tasse recognized Tom Vaughn, representing Cape Nordic. Mr. Vaughn summarized that Cape Nordic would like to install signs at Gull Crest to promote good trail etiquette when trails are groomed for skiing.

Chair Tasse asked his opinion of the town sign. Mr. Vaughn said Cape Nordic wants something more robust, such as a fixed post in the middle of the trail, seasonally placed. He shared pictures of signage installed at Riverside golf course in Portland, where the trails are 20'+ in width. The signage would require funding and he does not have cost estimates from the sign company.

Mr. De Vries suggested the town sign be installed this season as a temporary measure and then monitor effectiveness in respecting groomed trails. We have snow so we should get signs out now.

Mr. Vaughn agreed that the Cape Nordic version of signs will not be available this season. He offered to deploy signs at Gull Crest and estimated that 20 signs would be sufficient. Town staff will prepare the signs. Going forward, he would like to use signs like Riverside. Chair Tasse agreed they would look more professional.

Chair Tasse said we will try our signs for now. Cape Nordic had talked about marketing across the greenbelt trail network. The committee welcomes assistance. Signage should be branded as Town of Cape Elizabeth and not private entities.

Mr. Vaughn said he has two goals, first to sign for Cape Nordic. A separate issue is to improve signage. Does the town want different levels of signage. We can facilitate that and it will involve some expense.

Chair Tasse recognized the signage done in-house and that it may be time for an upgrade. He prefers not to hire a consultant and perhaps Cape Nordic can help. Mr. De Vries would like Tom to provide a report at the end of the season.

Mr. Vaughn noted there was a community event at Gull Crest on Saturday. There was only 5" of snow, but both parking lots were nearly full with cars. Dozens of people attended and were on the trails, and there was great energy for the trails.

Ms. Day noted that the sign has a typo, and staff will make the correction.

Spurwink Bridge and boardwalk. Ms. O'Meara reported that Brian Alexander is working on the logistics of getting lumber delivered to the site, subject to weather and cold conditions. The committee wants signage closing the trail and Ms. O'Meara will get that installed once work commences.

Easement Monitoring. Ms. O'Meara reviewed that the town owns conservation land for which the Cape Elizabeth Land Trust holds easements and they provide a monitoring report to the town each year. She recognized Ardath Dixon, representing CELT.

Ms. Dixon reviewed the monitoring reports for the Town Farm, where a large chunk of Styrofoam needs to be removed. Ms. O'Meara reviewed the efforts to get the chunk removed last year and will contact the Department of Public Works about removal.

Ms. Dixon reviewed the monitoring report for Cross Hill. Potential encroachments by sheds, tree house, zip line and disposal of yard debris were noted. Ms. Dixon noted that some property boundary locations were unclear.

Chair Tasse focused on the shed, which, if on town open space, is a significant violation of the easement terms. It is likely, but not 100% certain, that the shed is on the town open space. The committee agreed that staff would prepare a letter to be sent to the abutter regarding the location and, if needed, relocation of the shed off town owned open space.

Regarding other possible encroachments identified by CELT, the committee voted 6-0 to authorize CELT to contact Cross Hill property owners regarding possible encroachments onto town open space.

Ms. Dixon wanted to confirm if brush dumping on town open space is considered an encroachment. Ms. O'Meara confirmed that it is not allowed and the committee agreed CELT can include this type of encroachment in their efforts.

Ms. O'Meara then reviewed that the town has a responsibility to inspect its conservation easements and it is a good opportunity for committee members to become familiar with town easements if they perform the inspection. There is a form for each property she can provide. Committee members volunteered to perform the following inspections:

Great Pond Condos - De Vries
Hobstone - Sullivan
Leighton Farms - Sullivan
Karu/Arlington - Day
Loveitt Woods - Tasse and O'Meara
DOI/Pollack Brook - Moore
Wildwood - Ketcham

Ms. O'Meara will follow up with an email to members with report form. Inspections should aim to be completed by end of March.

Great Pond. The boat rack report has been provided and Ms. O'Meara summarized season highlights. The committee wants the boat rack lottery applications to be mentioned in the next Greenbelt Gazette.

Gazette. Items to include in the Greenbelt Gazette include boat rack applications will be available, Nordic trail signage encourages courtesy on groomed trails, and no alteration of town owned open space without permission, Spurwink bridge and boardwalk repairs, and seeking volunteers for other trail improvement projects.

Priority setting. The committee will discuss prioritizing future trail improvement projects at the February and March meetings. The signage discussion will wait until March when Tom Vaughn can report on success of the Nordic trail signage. The committee can also look at signage in other communities.

7. Budget. Ms. O'Meara reviewed the current fund balances and CIP funding for the Spurwink bridge and boardwalk project. The greenbelt trails fund has been changed to a CIP account, which allows unspent funds to roll into the next year.

The committee agreed to ask for the same funding as last year, \$40,000. Ms. Ketcham suggested trying to get two projects done with the MCC team.

Ms. Ketcham made a motion, seconded by Mr. Moore, to recommend \$40,000 in funding for FY 2023. The motion passed 6-0. Funding should include upgrading signage.

8. Planning Board Review. Staff reviewed the proposed buffering amendments for Maxwell Woods. Ms. Day noted that the puddle behind the apartment building is still a problem. Staff has asked the acting town engineer to inspect to confirm the grading is consistent with the approved plan.

Ms. Day also noted the large snowbank on the Red house trail off Mitchell Rd. The committee will send a letter to the property owner asking if snow plowing can be shifted to the side to reduce the build up of snow.

9. Next meeting. The next meeting will be held on February 8th and feature a discussion of priority setting for trail improvements. The meeting adjourned at 8:49 p.m.