

**Conservation Committee Meeting Minutes
Cape Elizabeth Town Hall
7:00 p.m., Tuesday, January 14, 2024**

Present: Corinne Ketcham, Acting Chair, Michelle Boyer, Matthew Grymak, Emily Helliesen Day, Stacy Dietsch, Bruce Moore, Mitch Wacksman.

Staff: Maureen O'Meara, Town Planner

1. Call to Order.
2. Election of Officers. Ms. Day made a motion, seconded by Mr. Moore, to nominate Corinne Ketcham to serve as Chair, and the motion passed 6-0 1(Ketcham abstains). Mr. Moore made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Ketcham, to nominate Emily Helliesen Day to serve as Vice Chair and the motion passed 6-0-1(Day abstains).
3. Minutes. Mr. Moore made a motion, seconded by Ms. Day, to approve the November 12, 2025 minutes and the motion passed 7-0.
4. Citizen comments. No one present wanted to speak.
5. Orientation/FOAA Training. Ms. O'Meara made a presentation on procedures to comply with the Freedom of Access Act. The committee is required to comply with the law, but not explicitly required to obtain training, which was still provided.
6. CELT easement monitoring reports. Ardath Dixon, CELT Stewardship manager presented the monitoring reports for Cross Hill, Town Farm and Elizabeth Farms. She noted that she has installed the dog waste station at the Town Farm.

Elizabeth Farms. It was challenging to establish boundaries per deed. Monitoring reports have been sent to neighbors. The committee briefly discussed adding trails to the area, but noted the wet conditions and likely property owner opposition, and decided not to pursue that at this time.

Cross Hill: Ms. Dixon reviewed the encroachments found and some of the older encroachments have been addressed. There was general agreement that disposal of a small number of pumpkins on town open space would not be considered a violation. The committee discussed how letters will be mailed to property owners where encroachments have been documented.

Mr. Wacksman made a motion, seconded by Mr. Moore, to add to the letter that if action on the encroachment is not taken by a specified date, then the Town or CELT will remove the infraction, and motion passed 7-0.

The committee noted where trees have been removed on town land. The committee would like a requirement that there be a reforest/replanting requirement.

Chair Ketcham asked if Ms. Dixon needed someone to accompany her when having conversations with property owners? Ms. Boyer noted that we had invited property owners to attend a Conservation Committee meeting in the past, and no one came. Ms. O'Meara will coordinate with Ms. Dixon on future property owner visits.

Ms. Day would like to revise last year's template letter with modifications for folks receiving the letter for the second year. The committee will review that at the next meeting, as well as the spreadsheet showing encroachments.

Ms. Dixon said that, last year, the letter was sent to all property owners from the town and an email was sent by CELT. CELT will send emails next month. She also noted an old deer stand on town open space and did not have identifying information as required by the Conservation Ordinance.

Mr. Wacksman made a motion, seconded by Ms. Boyer, to allow CELT to remove the deer stand and the motion passed 6-0.

The Committee expressed thanks to Ms. Dixon for her work.

7. Greenbelt Implementation/Management

Budget. Ms. O'Meara presentation information on the current account balance, how funds have been spent by category, and FY2026 budget items. The committee discussed projects and funding needs for the next year.

Mr. Wacksman noted that an additional 10 boards are needed to address immediate issues on the Outer Loop trail at Gull Crest. We should request funding for another machine built trail project.

Ms. Boyer suggested the town seek funding from the Maine Trails bond for the Outer Loop.

Chair Ketcham made a motion, seconded by Ms. Day, that the Conservation Committee submit a budget request for \$60,000 for FY 2026 for greenbelt trails work.

Ms. O'Meara reviewed the current account balance, minus anticipated expenses through FY 2025, and requested the Conservation Committee consider purchasing 2 picnic tables for the village green. Mr. Moore made a motion, seconded by Ms. Boyer, to recommend up to \$3,500 for purchase of 2 metal picnic tables and the motion passed 7-0. The committee discussed colors and there was agreement blue would not be chosen.

Priority projects. The committee reviewed an updated list of projects from the FB Environmental assessment and most of the projects at the Town Farm, Gull Crest, Cross Hill/Winnick Woods (pending the completion of the machine built trail project) are done. The focus will now be on completing projects in Stonegate.

The committee agreed to seek necessary permitting for the remaining greenbelt project areas and will review the proposal submitted by Sebago Technics to obtain the permitting at the February meeting. The committee will also discuss a possible MMC application in February.

Winnick Woods Invasive Plant management. Mr. Moore updated the committee that he was in touch with the Tree Warden and they discussed hiring a company to permit machine removal of invasives in Winnick Woods at the parking lot and along the beginning of the main trail, and the Meadow Trail. There is a lot of bittersweet pulling down trees. This could be a pilot project.

Chair Ketcham suggested getting a quote for the cost of the project.

Ms. Dixon shared CELT's experience with machine removal of invasives at Runaway Farms in the Fall, 2021. They are actively maintaining and you can see the line where natives are taking hold. They hired Vegetation Removal Services, who are very knowledgeable and use cut and paint versus spray treatment. CELT also did invasive management at Great Pond I, which they are keeping up, and also Japanese knotweed at Beach Bluff Terrace.

Mr. Moore said the methodology is very effective.

Chair Ketcham suggested doing a site visit and then bring the issue back in March/April. The town has received a \$2,000 donation for invasives management at Winnick Woods.

In response to a question, Ms. Dixon said CELT paid \$2,500 a day for the initial machine removal, and the follow-up is less. The Committee noted that they will need to budget funds for invasive management.

Gnome project. The committee noted the update provided by David Croft on the status of the gnome house project. Ms. Day was the lead meeting with Mr. Croft to identify locations for gnome house placement and she endorsed the committee's decision to put limits on where they can be installed.

South Portland Open Space acquisition. Ms. Day noted the newspaper articles about the land acquisition close to Sawyer Rd. Is there an opportunity to create a connection to Cape Elizabeth?

Mr. Grymak noted there are lots of no trespassing signs in that area. Ms. Day suggested that may related to the L.P. Murray pit. The committee reviewed Mapgeo mapping for

potential Cape connections and directed staff to check on status of the South Portland purchase.

Remaining items. Due to the time, the committee will consider the remaining items next month.

8. Planning Board review. The Committee reviewed the Blue Meadow Final subdivision review package. There are no changes to the proposed wetland alterations from the preliminary review. Chair Ketcham noted that the committee had discussed the wetland alteration for the condominium building and the rationale was acceptable.

Chair Ketcham made a motion, seconded by Mr. Moore, to recommend the Blue Meadow open space information and Resource Protection Permit application is complete, subject to provision of a public access easement on the proposed sidewalk and the motion passed 6-0.

9. Next meeting. The next meeting of the committee will be February 11, 2025. The meeting adjourned at 9:17 p.m.