

Conservation Committee Meeting Minutes
Cape Elizabeth Town Hall
7:00 p.m., Tuesday, March 12, 2024

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

Staff: Maureen O'Meara, Town Planner

1. Call to Order. Chair Matt Craig called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.
2. Public Comment. No member of the public wished to speak.
3. Minutes. The February 13, 2024 minutes were approved 6-0.
4. Canterbury License.

Chair Craig was pleased with the proposal for a 10-year license and the license agreement looks fine.

Ms. Boyer asked for background on the license. Ms. O'Meara explained that this was negotiated by the Conservation Committee who approached the Canterbury on the Cape Association about public use of trails on their open space. The original license has expired and the condo association, after reviewing options, is offering a 10-year license, which is a tribute to the Conservation Committee's stewardship. She noted that the proposed changes to the original license are consistent with the town's Management plan policies.

Mr. More made a motion, seconded by Ms. Dietsch, to recommend the license to the Town Council for approval and the motion passed 6-0.

5. U29-40 lot disposition.

Ms. O'Meara summarized that, in accordance with the Town Disposition of land policy, the Town Council has referred town owned land U29-40 to the Conservation Committee for review. A copy of the disposition policy has been provided, as well as a map of the lot with Resource Protection District boundaries overlaid.

Ms. Day explained that she lived in the neighborhood and took pictures of the lot, which she shared with the committee. The lot is wet with a stream running through it and a dry triangle.

Mrs. Ketcham noted that the request to purchase the lot was to create lawn, which is not allowed within a 250' RP 1 buffer. Do we need to do a wetland survey?

Ms. Boyer asked if the lot is buildable? A wetland survey would be needed to answer that question.

Chair Craig noted that Cape Elizabeth is partnering with South Portland on improvements to Trout Brook water quality and this appears counter to the town's interest.

Mr. Sullivan asked if the lot owner would fill the lot?

Ms. Dietsch asked what the Town Council would do with the committee recommendation? That is unknown. She suggested there are reasons to recommend against sale of the lot.

Committee members also commented that the purchase price offered seems low.

Mr. Moore asked if the land could be sold with deed restrictions? It could.

Chair Craig said the best use of the land is as open space.

Mr. Moore made a motion, seconded by Ms. Dietsch, to recommend to the Town Council not to sell the land and to keep it natural. The motion passed 7-0.

Ms. Dietsch asked that the map provided to the Town Council include the location of Trout Brook.

6. Greenbelt Management.

Cross Hill monitoring. Letters have been prepared for mailing to Cross Hill property owners who appear to have encroached on town open space. In response to a request from Ardath Dixon, CELT Stewardship manager, a copy of the letters will be provided to her. Letters will be mailed March 21st.

The committee agreed that property owners who have questions would be directed to attend the April 9th Conservation Committee meeting. In response to a question from Ms. Dixon if property owners request a site visit, the committee consensus is that property owners should first attend the committee meeting. Site visits may later include Conservation Committee members.

Winnick Woods. Ms. O'Meara reported that a contract has been signed with L.P. Murray to make improvements to the parking lot, specifically items 2 and 3 recommended by the Cumberland County Soil and Water Conservation District.

Ms. Boyer asked if item 1 is needed. Ms. O'Meara said that items 2 and 3 can be done independently of item 1, and that Public Works had concerns with maintenance of item 1, an open top culvert.

Ms. Day made a motion, seconded by Mr. Moore, to close the trailhead for the duration of construction and the motion passed 7-0. The contractor will notify Ms. O'Meara prior to construction and she will get that posted to the town website. The committee would also like to post a sign, which Ms. O'Meara will get made and Mr. Moore will install. Ms. Day suggested directing trail users to park at Eastman Meadows during construction.

Nordic Trail. Chair Craig said the trail is not supporting skiing with the lack of snow. He suggested we invite Jay Weiss to the next meeting to plan the boardwalk improvement.

MCC Team. Mr. Moore and Ms. Day volunteered to be liaison for the MCC Team when they do the Winnick Woods improvements. We have a meeting with the MCC Team leader on June 13th at 9:00 a.m. and the committee decided to hold a preparation site walk on May 6th at 4:00 p.m., meeting in the parking lot.

Dyer Pond Road Parking Restrictions. Ms. O'Meara updated the committee on the Ordinance Committee work responding to complaints from Dyer Pond Road residents who do not want parking on the road. A plan to create 5 off-road parking spaces is under discussion.

Mrs. Ketcham said that 5 spaces seemed sufficient. The committee was informed that the Ordinance Committee will discuss parking restrictions at the meeting on March 25th.

Other. Committee members noted trees down. Specific locations include (1) Pollack Brook trail off Spurwink Ave between the bridge and the town farm, and (2) Two Lights Trail next to pond.

Budget. Committee members received an update on the Greenbelt maintenance FY 2025 funding.

Gazette. Items for inclusion on the gazette include muddy trails, Earth Day pick-up April 22-26th. Ms. Boyer asked about vernal pools. CELT is offering a program on "Big Night." In response to a question, Ms. O'Meara said vernal pools are regulated under the existing wetland regulations.

7. Next meeting.

The next meeting of the committee will be April 9th. The meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.