

Conservation Committee Meeting Minutes
Cape Elizabeth Town Hall
7:00 p.m., Tuesday, April 11, 2023

Present: Corinne Ketcham, Chair, Michelle Boyer, Matt Craig, Emily Helliesen Day, Stacey Dietsch, 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. Public Comment. No member of the public wished to speak.
3. Minutes. Ms. Day made a motion, seconded by Mr. Craig, to approve the March 8, 2023 meeting minutes, which passed 6-0.
4. Greenbelt Management.

Chair Ketcham took the Machine built trail draft RFP out of order to allow participation by Ms. Day, who will need to leave the meeting early.

Ms. O'Meara introduced the draft, including the map showing the proposed trail location. The trail loop is ½ mile from Tiger Lily Ln to the north connecting with Hawthorn, then about ½ around to the south to complete the loop. Ms. Day has provided some vendor suggestions, and the RFP will be posted to the website for anyone to respond to.

Mr. Sullivan asked about root impact. Ms. O'Meara referenced the loop trail at Winnick Woods that was machine-built. Roots at the surface are removed, leaving a more walkable trail surface.

Ms. Boyer asked about abutters. Ms. O'Meara said the trail is on town land. Ms. Day noted this is town property and would make the trails accessible to her 5-year old, where now only experienced riders can use them. Ms. O'Meara confirmed the trail is very rugged for pedestrians until you reach the portion where someone is blowing the leaves.

There were questions about cost (the last machine built trail was subsidized by NEMBA) and how existing boardwalks would be treated? The RFP will be revised to request information about blending in boardwalks. Ms. Day suggested the distance may be 2 miles and she suggested that we ask proposers to identify where no trail improvement is needed. The trail access location and if any equipment will be stored on onsite were also added to the RFP.

Following amendments to the RFP, Ms. Day made a motion, seconded by Chair Ketcham, to approve the amended RFP and the motion passed 6-0.

Eagle Scout 2-32 and 2-40. Joe Gray, 13 year old eagle scout candidate with Life Scout Troup #30 made a presentation about building improvements identified in the trail assessment as #32 and 2-40 in Stonegate. 2-32 will be extended to about 27' and 2-40 will be constructed to incorporate an existing stone surface. Ms. O'Meara noted that boardwalk improvements scope must be consistent with existing permitting, which allows for a 20% extension of defined lengths. The bend will be taken out of 2-40, reducing the total length of boardwalk. Mr. Gray would like to complete the projects by late May/early June.

Chair Ketcham made a motion to fund \$1,500 for purchase of supplies (lumber and hardware) to construct improvements 2-32 and 2-40, which was seconded by Ms. Day and the motion passed 6-0.

NEMBA event. Ted Kerkam, representing the New England Mountain Biking Association (NEMBA), has submitted a request to approve a series of Wednesday evening rides on greenbelt trails which is held annually. The route has been adjusted slightly and some is located on CELT land, which CELT has approved. The route has changed to the northerly connection to Eastman Rd. Mr. Kerkam would like to hear any public feedback. Mr. Craig noted that some of the route is on property with off-leash hours.

Ms. Ketcham made a motion to approve the NEMBA event, seconded by Ms. Dietsch, and the motion passed 6-0.

Ms. Day suggested that NEMBA volunteer a work day on the trails and Ms. O'Meara will send Mr. Kerkam the priority report.

5. South Portland Conservation Committee Trout Brook Discussion

Barbara Dee and Cory McKenna, representing the South Portland Conservation Committee, discussed an effort to obtain grant funding to make improvements to the Trout Brook Watershed, which is designated Urban Impaired.

Ms. Dee explained that Alex Abbott, an independent contractor, suggested the city look to NFWF (National Fish and Wildlife Foundation) funding to replace 6 culverts that restrict flow in Trout Brook. The NFWF pre-application requires community involvement so she is introducing the project in case they move ahead with a full application. They are also working with land trusts. A volunteer time commitment would be helpful and South Portland is committing 20% of its wetland conservation fund (equals \$60,000) to the grant.

Mr. Craig explained that the Casco Bay Estuary Partnership (CBEP) has worked on grant funding for an engineering study underway. He asked what is the South Portland vision?

Ms. Dee referenced South Portland Stormwater manager Fred Dillon and his work to improve the classification of Trout Brook. There are 6 culverts to fix and South Portland has environmental policies it is implementing, including the recently passed land bond.

Mr. Craig suggested the vision is stream restoration.

Mr. McKenna said there are identified problems we cannot address, such as chloride intrusion from road salt, but there are problems we can fix like the culverts.

Ms. Boyer asked if the vision is to bring fish back? They have some fish now and want to improve fish passage, noting the trout fish release by middle schoolers.

Ms. Dee said the larger issue is to improve Sawyer Marsh.

Chair Ketcham asked what they want from the Cape Conservation Committee?

Ms. Dee said that if we move to full proposal, there are logistics to work out and Mr. McKenna said the time line will be short.

Chair Ketcham asked if a financial contribution is requested and Mr. McKenna said that more collaboration is needed rather than funding.

Mr. Sullivan asked what improvement, beyond culverts, are contemplated? The discussion noted education and outreach to Trout Brook abutters and that there are culverts in Cape Elizabeth that have been identified as constrictions.

Mr. Craig summarized the timeline and proposal process. Ms. Dietsch asked what help is needed and who should do that? She is 100% in support of the pre-proposal. Committee members also noted the Spurwink Marsh proposal the town is pursuing with Scarborough and Ms. O'Meara said we are also submitting for NFWF funding.

The group agreed to pursue this further.

6. Greenbelt Management.

Tiny trails Event. Danielle Kroop, Tiny Trails, would like permission to hold the Tiny Trails event in Gull Crest again this year. They can avoid or use the boardwalk, depending on how improvements progress, will run a 5k loop, and use the parking and porta potties at Gull Crest. She is flexible on numbers, and asking for 100 participants. There will be a tent set up and she expects all to wrap up by 10:45 a.m.

Mr. Sullivan asked about an entrance fee and Ms. Kroop said it would be \$25-\$30.

Chair Ketcham asked her to encourage car pooling and the committee discussed adequacy of parking at both lots. The committee confirmed a 9:00 am start time.

Ms. Kroop will send the insurance rider.

Chair Ketcham made a motion to approve the event with a date of August 12th, rain date August 19th and Ms. Boyer seconded the motion, which passed 5-0.

Event process revisions. At the next meeting, the committee will discuss possible revisions to the event process to charge a fee to use town open space when there is an entrance fee, and to increase the size of events that the committee can approve without further action by the town council.

CELT-Chickadeeds Invasives event. The committee discussed the event with CELT representative Ardath Dixon at the last meeting, and CELT has provided a formal request on the invasives project application form.

Ms. Boyer made a motion to approve the CELT event, seconded by Mr. Craig, and the motion passed 5-0.

Maine Pops Event. Ms. O'Meara noted that the event application indicated that 160 people would attend the event and the Conservation Committee can only approve events up to 150 attendees, without then referring them to the town council. This event was held last year and was well received. The committee agreed that it was likely that no more than 150 attendees would be onsite at any one time.

Chair Ketcham made a motion to approve the Maine Pops event, seconded by Mr. Craig, and the motion passed 5-0.

Boat Rack Report. Ms. O'Meara reported that 180 applications were received for a boat rack slot and that most of the lottery winners were first time users. The community boat is also popular and all of last year's equipment is still in place.

7. Planning Board review.

Ms. O'Meara presented the plans for the solar array proposed at the landfill and how the greenbelt trails are proposed to be rerouted along the side of the fence. The committee noted the fence location won't be that attractive, but is limited and supports green energy.

Chair Ketcham made a motion, seconded by Ms. Dietsch, that the Conservation Committee feels the trail relocation is appropriate given the green energy from the solar field.

8. Gazette. The committee would like the gazette to note the new participants on the boat racks, and all the events.
9. Other Trails. Ms. Sullivan suggested that a supplemental trail be created at Town Farm along the road. The committee reviewed the aerial mapping of the area, noted the wetland crossing that would be needed, and Mr. Sullivan withdrew the suggestion.
10. Next meeting. The committee agreed to include discussion of event regulations revisions, and the MCC trail work event at the May 9th meeting. The meeting adjourned at 9:04 p.m.