

Conservation Committee Meeting Minutes
Jordan Conference Room, Town Hall
7:00 p.m., Thursday, September 9, 2021

Present: Mitch Wacksman, Chair, Matt Craig, Emily Helliesen Day, Corinne Ketcham, Chris DeVries, Bruce Moore, Jim Tasse.

Staff: Maureen O'Meara, Town Planner

1. Public Comment.

Sheila Wellehan, 24 Rocky Hill Rd - She has a process concern regarding the Ice Arena proposal. The Town Council will be hearing a request to authorize fund-raising for the arena at Gull Crest and the proposal has not been before the Conservation Committee. The project could be an asset to the Town, however, during the Fort Williams Master Plan presentation, it was noted that there is lots to learn about best practices when private organizations propose a project on town land. For example, the children's garden is now a maintenance burden. The arena will require a clear cut and the Conservation Committee should be involved.

2. Minutes. Mr. Moore made a motion to approve the August 10th minutes, seconded by Mr. Tasse. Mr. Tasse recommended an amendment where he "empathized" with the neighbors and the amendment was accepted. The minutes were approved 4-0-3 (Craig, Day, Ketcham abstain).

3. Planning Board review. The committee agreed to take item 5 out of order due to the number of attendees present for that item.

Ms. O'Meara provided an overview of the Carr Woods project and noted a Conservation Committee member attended the Planning Board site walk. Mr. Fisher, representing Carr Woods, was present and declined to make a presentation.

Jen Johansson, 2 Rocky Hill Rd - She submitted comments by email. At the site walk, the Planning Board asked for a peer review of wetlands. She had a wetland scientist attend the site walk and he felt that Wetland D may be an RP1 wetland. She requests that a survey of contiguous wetland adjacent to the property be provided. The applicant said they did not map the wetlands because they were off the property. There should also be test pits in wetland D. The open space includes a strip that is less than 50' wide and there is less than 45% open space set aside.

Brandon Mazer, attorney for Johanssons - He called attention to the standards of a Resource Protection Permit, Sec. 19-8-3 Section E Construction of Roads. The project has not avoided wetland alteration for road construction and asks that the permit be denied. He also questions if 45% of the land has been set aside as open space.

Ben Morrill, 981 Shore Rd - He has submitted a letter and abuts the development. He prefers the road proposed along Deep Brook Rd to the road proposed parallel to his property line. The new road location impacts more natural vegetation and an active wildlife corridor. The difference in amount of wetland alteration is small, 417 sq. ft. He also questions how wetlands were measured and if the wetland at the Deep Brook entrance was measured.

Richard Blake, 2 Ivie Rd - He has concerns following the site walk and the Conservation Committee is looking at incomplete plans. This should be tabled until there is more information. He measured 2,000 sq. ft. of ledge not included on the plans. No waivers should be granted if they do not benefit the town.

Lise Pratt, 32 Wood Rd - She thanked Ms. Day for attending the site walk and asks that consideration be tabled tonight until complete information is provided. The application has not been designed to minimize wetland alteration as much as possible. The road can be rerouted and fewer units built. The open space is junk with wetlands, bedrock and steep slopes with no practical use to residents.

Sheila Wellehan - She echoes the request to wait until more information has been provided.

The public comment period was closed.

Ms. Day shared that she attended the site walk and there is lots of information missing. She supports the Planning Board asking for a peer review.

Ms. O'Meara was asked about the Open Space Zoning review standards. She was asked to provide the committee with a copy of Sec. 19-7-2 in the Zoning Ordinance.

Mr. Tasse supports tabling consideration until a fresh application is submitted by the applicant.

Mr. Craig thanked the public for making comments. The project does not meet the intent of Open Space zoning and maybe the applicant should just pay the open space impact fee. There should be more effort to protect land adjacent to town open space and more effort with trails. The plans need a wholesale rethink.

Mr. Tasse questioned if the project meets standard 8, ecological values, in the Resource Protection Standards (Sec. 19-8-3).

Ms. O'Meara explained that the Planning Board has asked for a peer review of wetlands and bedrock and how that will be processed. She recommends that the Conservation Committee formally convey to the Planning Board that they are delaying making comments.

Mr. Tasse made a motion that the Conservation Committee table comment and will wait for a new plan, at which time the committee will provide comment. The motion was seconded by Ms. Ketcham and passed 7-0.

Ms. O'Meara summarized the Technical Amendment request from the Planning Board to the Town Council to authorize assembly of a Technical Amendments package. At this time, the list of amendments includes changing Resource Protection requirements for trail boardwalks, which the committee supports.

4. Greenbelt Management

Outer Loop Boardwalk Project.

Public Comment. Philip Mathieu, CELT, offered to lend a wheeled cart that was used to move bridge beams. It will be cable locked at the site and he will email Maureen the combination. The committee thanked Mr. Mathieu for the offer.

Mr. Tasse will deliver impact drivers borrowed from NEMBA.

The committee discussed disposal of the old boardwalk. Chair Wacksman updated the committee that during the site visit, it was agreed that the untreated hemlock boards would be left in the woods to decompose. The pressure treated 4 x 4s with hardware would be cut away and removed from the site. With the long distance to carry lumber to a pick-up location, we do not have the labor resources to completely remove the old boardwalk.

Mr. Craig is concerned with leaving the old boardwalk, including possible hazard for hunters. Mr. Tasse added that hunters have a setback from the trail.

The committee reviewed last logistics, and asked for committee members to meet scheduled volunteer groups onsite.

Spurwink Bridge and Boardwalk Replacement. Brian Alexander remains on the schedule to replace the decking this fall. The funding is in a CIP account.

Greenbelt Gazette. The next issue should include a safety reminder about hunting season(s) and a thank you to Jake Goodwin for the Town Farm Trail improvements. A second eagle scout, Jacob Liess, is teed up to make additional improvements. The committee wanted to know when he will do the work.

BCM Training event September 30th. The Bicycle Coalition of Maine has submitted an application to repeat an earlier training event on September 30th at Gull Crest. The committee thanked him for submitting a request and asked if this will be a recurring event, in which case the committee would consider approving a series of dates under one application. Mr. Tasse said no additional dates are intended at this time. A motion was made by Chair Wacksman, seconded by Mr. DeVries to approve the request and the motion was approved by a vote of 6-0-1 (Tasse abstain).

Robinson Woods Universal Access Trail project. Mr. Mathieu asked to update the committee on work by CELT to create a universal access trail in Robinson Woods. CELT is creating an advisory group with stakeholders outside the CELT leadership who will advise on mobility. He asked the committee to send anyone interested in participating to him.

5. Next meeting. The meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m. The next meeting will be on October 12th.