

Open Space Committee Meeting Minutes 2/24/2020

Members present: David Schochet, Larry Flaccus, Jim Perry, Norm Beebe, Garth LaPointe, Joel Dwight

Meeting called to order at 7:05 pm

Larry went to the Planning Board to get approval for municipal walking trails by right in all zoning destinations. They agreed this made sense. They will put it on their upcoming public meeting agenda, and it will go to the Town Meeting for approval. At that time there maybe some neighborhood objection.

Art Schwenger called Larry and told him he had spoken with **Jane Hanford** who is generally supportive of the trail on her land but said it is now up to her son.

Larry went to the ZBA meeting for a pre-application conference. Larry pointed out that over 300 respondents to our 2014 Open Space/Recreation survey were interested in more Town-accessible hiking trails and river access but the ZBA said we would need official recorded easements from all landowners whose property would be crossed by the trail; a simple note of permission would not suffice.

David, Jim, and Larry met with Melissa to rewrite the voluntary public access easement agreement to make it more user friendly and to perhaps have the FLT attorney assist us. We will use that approved document to approach landowners with. Donna McNickel (the Town atty) said it would be okay to get an agreement signed by the landowners that they would be agreeable to deeded easements in the future. We will vet it through the FLT lawyer then present it to Donna for approval.

Larry pointed out we have \$20,000.00 grant money to use but we may have to repurpose that grant. **Larry reported** that he had contacted two firms regarding the **geo technical survey** of the purposed trail route going downstream over the rough area from Deerfield Ave. The first **company was from Williamstown:** they had someone go down with Jim to look at the area, and had gotten back to Larry with a **cost estimate of \$11,000.00 to \$13,000.00 for the survey.** They are still working on their proposal. The estimate called for a number of borings that might require an access road put in by an excavator which would be difficult so Larry was going to ask about other options. **Larry also spoke with Melissa about the need for a surveyor** to locate property boundaries. She suggested taking current property maps and overlaying the trail with the help of a surveyor. There are a several lots near the proposed trail so it is important to know exactly where the trail will be in relation to the lots' boundaries. It now appears we would need easements from four landowners, and maybe a fifth.

Larry said that since we can't use the \$20,000.00 **MTWP grant** to build the trail (given the geological and access complications and the June deadline), we'll need to **repurpose it**. The state grant which expires on June 30, 2020 could be used for geo technical evaluation, legal work, consultation, signs (and perhaps even expenses for building another trail near the Wooded Loop) for other trails, and kiosks. Once we identify the different portions of expense, Larry will see if the grant can be worked to over as many expenses as possible. (The \$4,000.00 coming from the town does not have an expiration date like the grant does.)

Jim thought we should come up with **some talking points and then approach those landowners** who would need to give easements, to see how receptive they would be to granting them before we spend money on surveys. **David will work on landowner talking points; Jim** will finalize the Public Access Permission form. **Norm Beebe** will handle Mayhew contact with the Lawless brothers; **David** with Patrick Kilgallen; **Garth** with Robert Spencer; **Tom** with Ambrose Mwea and Stefan Topolsky.

Larry showed us a map of Mill Road which was formed on March 10th of 1845. It was a proposed road which was accepted by the town in 1846. Joe Judd is looking into the records to see how far the road extended and whether it had ever been discontinued.. Garth will see what information he can find about property lines and an existing road at the Registry of Deeds. We will get together our talking points and pre-agreement forms.

The **January OSC minutes** were slightly amended for a few corrections then accepted.

Jim then talked about trail signs. David has the sign that had gone missing from Harriet Payne's front yard. She would prefer not to have the sign put back up and her partner said the historical information (that we had gotten from the Historical Society) was incorrect. Jim will be busy making signage and we also have a year to use the \$300.00 from the Cultural Council to make educational signs about invasive species and forest health. This may be in the form of six 18" by 24" signs on 3/4" pressure treated plywood. Some MTWP grant money might be repurposed towards the Wooded Loop and Tower Trails. Jim told us that visitors have been using the trail brochures he puts out at the foot of Tower Trail kiosk and from from the FLT M&M trail kiosk.

David told the group about three upcoming conferences. One **this Wed at Buckland Shelburne Community Center** organized by the Hilltown Land Trust including workshops and discussion about local conservation. Another - **the Massachusetts Land Conservation Conference at Worcester Technical High School on March 25**. This should be a large meeting with many workshops and can be accessed online. Also **Mass Open Space Conference on April 25 at GCC from 9:30 am to 3:30 pm** organized by the Mt Grace Land Trust which will include five workshops. They would like the Shelburne OSC to be part of the panel and speak about how we stay effective and keep doing projects.

Larry mentioned the upcoming Keystone Forestry Training at Harvard Forest and suggested Garth might really enjoy attending. It begins on a Thursday night and goes into Sat. Room, meals, and a collection of educational materials are included. It features talks from professionals about conservation, wildlife, etc. It trains participants to be able to speak knowledgably with others about conservation and related topics. More can be learned on the MassWoods.com website.

Report from the Recreation Committee: Norm told us they are fully in support of the trail. They are also trying to resurrect the Pickle Ball program. The Food Bank and the Clothing Closet are still in the Cowell Gym. They are also trying to bring back Ping Pong. He also noted that Stefan Topolski had made his property available for public ice skating.

Jim and Garth will be continuing to work on the Wooded Loop Trail making a return path paralleling Old Greenfield Rd rather than requiring hikers to walk in the road itself.

Larry told us the Planning Board meets on **Feb 25**.

Larry announced that there will be another **\$20,000.00 grant round from the Woodland Partnership** that will be usable for another year.

Larry also told us we want to prepare for a State **recreational trails grant available next Feb**.

Meeting adjourned at 8:32 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Joel Dwight, Secretary pro tem