

Winchendon Community Park Infrastructure Committee December 14, 2020 Minutes Zoom Meeting

Committee Members Present: Dave Romanowski, Ken LaBrack, Jane LaPointe, Dylan Romanowski, Randy Tenney

Public: Mount Grace: Fletcher Harrington, Rocio LaLanda, KimLynn Nguyen

Meeting called to order at 5:32 p.m.

Administrative

Approved Minutes: November 23, 2020

Business

New

1. Information from Mount Grace on **considerations for conserving and protecting the Community Park**. There are two ways to approach conservation.
 - a. One is a Conservation Restriction (CR) which can be customized to define what is included and what areas of the park are excluded from the CR. Would allow for additional trails; for forestry (to best management practices), and activities that are consistent with the purpose (i.e. agriculture, open space, scenic). It's like a deed that removes development options and yet still allows for specific uses, tailored to the carrying capacity of the land (which can include a right to build - with thresholds). The process for approving a CR includes: sign off by BOS and by State (to ensure protection is valid) with diligence in who is holding the CR, a survey and title work. The holder of a CR can be a Town or Land Trust - however, a town cannot hold a CR on land that it owns. With a CR, it's often a partnership with the Land Trust on the stewardship of the pWe have much to learn before pursuing this).
 - b. The other is to transfer ownership to the Town's Conservation Commission and invoke Article 97 (part of Commonwealth of MA Constitution) - deeded for a specific purpose, a public use, for perpetuity. Article 97 is designed to conserve the parcel so it doesn't get broken up for future private development/subdivision. There is an example of this from Gardner that Mount Grace can provide.
 - c. The anticipated flexibility required or desired for the Park may make a CR more complicated. However, the Article 97 option requires more from the town.
 - d. It's possible to conserve a part of the parcel.
 - e. There are lots of questions to be raised and answered. Fletcher/Mount Grace will send us examples, templates, etc.
2. Potential to **partner with Mount Grace to establish Friends of the WCP** to attend to the condition, maintenance and upgrades to Park trails, etc. This will require more conversations

- a. Start with hosting meeting to get a better understanding of people's interest. Mount Grace could help with the hosting and advertising/promotion. Then host workdays - and watch for reoccurring people and/or reach out to local organizations, i.e. Scouts
- b. Organize trail work, programs to address invasive plants - can start small. Example from Eagle Reserve in Royalston: ask people, bring up at town meetings, site walk, Identify recreational opportunities, tap into networks. Mount Grace could help with the questions, etc.

3. Trail Plans for 2021

- a. The committee members acknowledge that the stewardship program the Park has/had in place wasn't functioning as originally intended. The program/stewards' function was to provide regular trail maintenance and possibly extend the trail system. It was intended that the stewards would organize these functions into projects, lead the projects and solicit volunteers to carry out the work. However, the stewards were never fully organized to do this. Due to a lack of community/volunteer involvement, the committee hired North Quabbin Trails Association this year to work on trail upgrades and maintenance .. and ongoing care of the lawns, fields and buildings was done or overseen by committee members Dylan Romanowski and Randy Tenny.
- b. Motion was made and approved: To officially end the stewardship program and to notify the current stewards and chief steward of this decision. It was noted that one steward resigned last year, that a second, Dylan Romanowski, who is a member of this committee agrees with the decision. The committee will ask the Town Manager to send a notice to the remaining steward, Rick Lucier.
- c. The committee plans to use the experience of the past two years to put in place a program to better define and accomplish the maintenance of the trails and the Park. We are tentatively calling this the "Friends of the Park" program. Communication and outreach to the community is a high need; will this be a committee member or a committed volunteer with experience in community outreach and engagement?
- d. The committee will plan an early 2021 update to the BOS of this decision and other actions taken at the Park during 2020.

4. Request from TWS regarding roofing tiles.

- a. The committee receive a request from Nick Hunt at TWS to get into the barn to see if there are roofing tiles stored there from when the School owned the property that could be used to replace damaged tiles on a School Building.
- b. Dylan will follow up with Nick to provide safe access to the barn.

5. Permission to be in the Park after dusk. The motion was made and approved to notify Chief Walsh that Dylan Romanowski has permission from the Committee to be in the Park, on his own, to check on vandalism and to contact the Police as needed. Ken will follow up with Chief Walsh.

Updates on actions

1. Trail Usage

- a. Trail Signs: work by NQTA is completed
- b. Park Rules Signs: Dave has installed three (Park Entrance, Mail Trailhead, Elm Street Entrance). He requested we look at these signs and assess how well they work (location, size, wording)
- c. Gates and "no motor vehicles" signs will be needed to prevent or deter unauthorized vehicle access to Meadows and Elm Street Path. These will be selected and installed in 2021
- d. Boardwalk/footbridges across wetland on Forest Cove Path
 - **Dylan** will install this Spring; may build in the barn over the winter
- e. Elm Street Bridge & Path
 - The Conservation Agent and Head of DPW met at the bridge after a period of heavy rain. They determined that this is a particularly complex problem and that, until it is fixed, this portion of the trail should be closed to the public.
 - Dave posted Trail Closed due to Repair signs at the entrance and near the pillars partway up the trail.
 - This notice, along with photos of the flooded trail will be posted on the Town website and Facebook page and on the Park and Winchendon Resident's FB page. **Dave**
 - Options for reopening this trail will be a priority for the Committee in 2021. **Jane** will review documents and provide a summary of what has been determined about this site.

2. Buildings/Built Infrastructure

- a. Observation Deck:
 - Randy Tenny intends to finish the deck once there is a lull in his work
 - Mike Mauri, a forester, visited the Park to advise us on how to approach the up to 50% vista clearing approved by the Conservation Commission.
 - **Dave Romanowski** will take the lead on managing/overseeing this work.
- b. House: Town Manager is taking care of the work to prepare the house for a controlled burn - removing oil, shutting off electricity, water, etc.

Topics to continue at a future meeting

- a. Garage: status of plans and pricing; review of available funds; follow up with Town Manager and Building Inspector
- b. Barn: removing the porcupines from the barn and sealing off access. They are beginning to chew through the interior door which will give them access to the main parts of the barn.

- c. Electricity - Garage & Barn: Dave will speak with the Town Manager about bringing electricity to the barn and garage.
- d. Newly Acquired 8.2 Acres: plan to meet with the abutters/neighbors to discuss the Park and to learn if they have survey markers that designate the boundary with the Park.

Meeting adjourned at 6:52 p.m.

Next Meeting: Monday, January 25 at 5:30 p.m.

Agenda will include

- Updates on some or all of the above, as available
- Identifying priorities, timelines, etc. for Committee/Park work
- Update to BOS

Longer Term

- Consideration on how the committee will seek or respond to community supported ideas, request and recommendations for Park infrastructure
- Plan for buckthorn removal and for wetland vista maintenance (required by ConCom - a plan submitted within 3 years of the July 2019 RDA)
- Policies, finances

Approved: January 25, 2021