

NORWICH CONSERVATION COMMISSION ZOOM MEETING DRAFT MINUTES: 15 September 2020

Members present: Craig Layne (chair), Lynnwood Andrews, Cheryl Asa, David Hubbard, Sage McGinley-Smith, Normal Miller, Chris Rimmer, Cody Williams

Guest: Brie Swenson

Meeting convened at 7:19 PM

No members of the public joined the meeting.

Craig asked for discussion of a mowing plan for the Milt Frye Nature Area. Lynnwood and Brie explained that last year the meadow was mowed by the town in late July in preparation for the Norwich Fair, although that mowing didn't include the entire meadow. The abutting property owner mowed it again in October. This year there was no July mowing and the abutting property owner mowed in August. That schedule isn't ideal from a conservation perspective, since the grasses and wildflowers in the meadow haven't yet set seed in August. The conservation easement stipulates that the area be mowed once yearly to maintain it as a meadow and to control invasive plants such as euonymus and buckthorn. Lynnwood proposes that it only be mowed once per year to minimize interruption of plant and animal life cycles, and that it be mowed up to the edge (the current tree line) to help keep invasives at bay. The remaining question is the best time of year to mow. She will consult with Jim Kennedy, and Chris will ask a colleague who is a pollinator specialist for a recommendation. Lynnwood asked who mows the diagonal path through the meadow and recommends that it be diverted around the perimeter rather than cutting through the center. Brie will try to find out.

Brie reported that MCS parents and teachers have asked if they can place lockable trunks or tubs in the MFNA for secure storage of valuables and teaching materials for classes. They also would like to use donated cable spools as tables for class activities. NCC has no objections, so Brie will ask UVLT for approval.

There was discussion of the next steps in the Norford Lake project. Cody mentioned that the draft letter requesting financial support for the project was approved by NCC during a previous meeting. However, we need to decide when to begin the active fund-raising phase of the project. Norman has been talking with members of the Norford Lake Club and other neighbors, who seem to be in support of the project, including some who have offered to help with fund-raising. Mary Sellman, in particular, should be invited to participate. Chris will contact Bob at VLT about starting the process. Norman asked if the Conservation Trust Fund could be used toward this effort, but it has already been committed to the Woody Adams project. Cody asked about the status of Woody Adams project funding; Craig explained that we're waiting to hear about the bridge loan. Craig reported that the Boy Scouts will be building an informational kiosk on the Woody Adams property as an Eagle Scout project. The Scouts may be able to fund the whole construction, but NCC can cover additional costs for lumber and/or supplies, if needed.

Lynnwood reported that an article about the importance of forest blocks, with the Woody Adams and Norford Lake projects as examples, has been submitted to the Norwich Times. We need to decide on a topic for the next article. She is working on the Post Office display but needs appropriate maps to use with it. Cody can provide the maps he used for the NCC website.

Craig reported that a comprehensive management plan is being written for the Woody Adams property and a draft will be provided to the NCC when it is ready.

Craig provided a copy of the Draft Memorandum delineating the responsibilities of the Norwich Trails Subcommittee that he wrote with Herb Durfee. It provides guidance for planning work, developing budgets, applying for grants, purchasing of materials and services, execution of trail work, applicable oversight of trail work by others, and reporting of activities in a manner consistent with town policies and state statutes. After a brief discussion, Cheryl moved to approve the document, Chris seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Chris reported that the phragmites patch in the Ompompanoosuc is flowering and bigger than in prior years. Land Stewardship, Inc. should be treating it now; David will check on the status of the work, since he knows the contract was signed. Lynnwood asked if there's a contract for phragmites removal along Beaver Meadow Road. Craig said that Redstart Consulting, Inc. has it scheduled for some time in September.

David reported that construction of the bridge over Charles Brown Brook has almost been completed, and the banks were seeded over the weekend with seed from a Massachusetts company that specializes in native plants. The seeds were covered with straw matting, and along with wattle should help stabilize the banks. The \$885 cost will be covered by a grant from the Norwich Women's Club.

Norman asked whether the NNC is involved in the Blood Brook bridge project. Brie explained that it's being handled by the town planner, but NCC will be notified if anything arises that involves conservation issues.

Norman moved to approve the August minutes, David seconded, and the motion was approved unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:12 PM.
Minutes compiled by Cheryl Asa