

TOWN OF WESTFORD
PLANNING COMMISSION & CONSERVATION COMMISSION MINUTES
Minutes for May 9, 2017 Meeting
Approved on May 12, 2017

Commission/Board Members Present: Wendy Doane, Gordon Gebauer, Seth Jensen, Mark Letorney, Sarah Pinto, Dale Rodgers, Chuck McGill and Marilyn Thomas.

Commission/Board Members Absent: Jeremy Berger and Joel Fay.

Also present: Melissa Manka (Planning Coordinator), Bob Heiser, Lori Johnson and Ray Geddens.

The meeting began at 6:34 p.m.

Jackson Farm & Forest Project

Day One Planning

Public Access & Information. The Planning Commission, Conservation Commission and Bob Heiser of VLT had a lengthy discussion regarding dissemination of information and public access after closing. Bob stated that VLT typically issues a press release after closing. The group had concerns that they will need time after closing to install a culvert in the ROW, open the stonewall, delineate/construct a trail to the proposed Town Forest and install signage. Some were concerned individuals would access the privately owned farm property prior to establishing access and impact farming operations. The group agreed that a public announcement would need to be made stating the property has been purchased but there is no access via Brookside Road at this time and access will be provided in the coming months. They agreed that signage should be placed along Brookside Road stating the same.

Stonewall Opening. Melissa will contact Queen City Soil and Stone to discuss the cost and timing of opening the stonewall to access the trail easement.

ROW Culvert. Melissa will speak with Brent about the timing and cost of installing a culvert in the Town ROW to access the trail easement.

Trail Mowing. Joel will be asked to mow the trail over the farmland to access the proposed Town Forest.

School Connection. The Conservation Commission will work with Joel on creation of a connection between the school/town trail system on the east side of Brook side Road and the proposed Town Forest trail access. The group will learn more about the location of trail easements on the school property to access town properties in the coming month. The easements are expected to be conveyed on June 21st.

Signage. The group decided that the following signage would be necessary on day one:

1. *Public access from Brookside Road coming soon. Please respect private property rights until then* - To be installed in the ROW every 250 ft.

2. *Please stay on trail*
3. *Maple Shade Town Forest*
4. A list of allowed and prohibited uses
5. Conservation Commission trail markers
6. Property map

Mark offered to make some of the signage.

Melissa will look into what happened to the Town Common kiosk that was taken down and, if unable to find it, will ask Pat whether the Town can use the JFFP sign to construct some sort of kiosk for public education at the proposed Town Forest.

Bob Heiser noted that VLT may be able to partner in the form of providing information, examples and connections on kiosks and signage.

Uses. Allowed uses are addressed in the Interim Management Plan and will be posted on the property. The allowed and prohibited uses will be more fully developed when the long-term management plan is created using a public process.

Trails. For at least the first year, or until a long-term management plan is adopted, the only established trail will be the trail over the farmland to access the logging roads located on the proposed Town Forest. The Town will have the ability to close logging roads if necessary due to their condition and/or make minor repairs to mitigate erosion and stormwater damage. Melissa brought up the issue of handicap accessibility. The group agreed access to trails would best be addressed on the school property to be transferred to the town.

Interim Management Plan

The Planning Commission and Conservation Commission reviewed the draft IMP and made minor revisions. Melissa will make the requested changes and send the document to the Selectboard prior to their meeting on Thursday. The group agreed to request review by the Selectboard prior to submission to VHCB for approval. After VHCB approval of the IMP the Selectboard will need to formally approve the Plan, which will likely happen in late May or early June.

Long-term Management Plan

The Town will have one year from the time of closing to develop a long-term management plan. The group hopes to receive a Town Forest Recreational Planning Community Assistance Grant to help in that process.

VT Town Forest Recreational Planning Community Assistance Program & Support Letters

The Planning Commission and Conservation Commission reviewed the draft grant application for the proposed Town Forest and Parcel 3 to be transferred from the school to the town as well as support letters. Melissa was asked to make revisions and send the document and a draft support letter to the Selectboard for review and approval prior to their meeting on Thursday. Gordon and Sarah will sign the Planning Commission and Conservation Commission support letters once revised.

Work Plan Development

The Planning Commission and Conservation Commission decided to hold another joint meeting to develop a work plan after the subdivision application for the farm and forest has been submitted to the Town.

The Planning Commission and Conservation Commission will also meet after August 1st when the grant awards are announced to determine next steps in developing a long-term management plan.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:56 p.m.

Submitted by,
Melissa Manka, Westford Planning Coordinator