

WESTFORD Common Committee Meeting, Public invited!
Tuesday June 13, 2023 at 9 am at the Brick Meeting House
Agenda

Call to order at 9:07 am

Roll call-Suzie Kearns, Caroline Brown, Lori Johnson Common Committee (CC) members

Members of the public-

Louise Jensen, resident, Melissa Manka, Town planner

Changes to the agenda-added a discussion about the Stark memorial bench.

Public comment, items not on the agenda-none

Organization-

There was a discussion about open meeting requirements. All agreed to follow the requirements.

Reorganization and elect chair. Caroline Brown moved to nominate Lori chair, Suzie seconded, all in favor.

There was a discussion on how to proceed with Common Use approvals. Due to open meeting laws, approval can no longer be done over email between all committee members. Nanette has been handling this alone over the interim, but the Common Committee feels that we should have some input as well. Suzie made a motion that the Town Administrator and the Common Committee chair jointly approve Common Use applications except those that require SB approval. Lori 2nd, all in favor.

Future tree trimming-Lori made a motion that the chair ask the SB to approve regular, annual tree trimming on the Common as they did last year for the lilacs. Caroline 2nd, all in favor.

Problems with parking ON the Common. It continues to be an issue that people park on the grass. This not only damages the grass but also has the potential to damage the underground drainage system. Several options were discussed including signs, fence, shrubs and rocks. After much discussion, Lori made a motion that an investigation of the number, size and cost of putting rocks along Common Road be started. Suzie 2nd, all in favor. Caroline agreed to work on this.

Caroline brought up the issue of the Stark memorial bench being out in the open now that the elm tree is gone. The bench is also not level. After some discussion, Suzie agreed to contact the Stark family and suggest they move the bench to the south side of the Common, near a maple across from the big oak. This would be a shady spot and near where many library events occur so the bench would get more use. Lori is to put out 3 wire flags to mark the approximate location.

How to protect the Common in the future. The Committee desires to maintain the Common as a green space that people can enjoy. Lori contacted VLCT about options including an ordinance. They didn't recommend an ordinance and suggested a conservation easement. Another option may be legal restrictions

within a deed. In order to protect the Common from future encroachment, the Committee will continue to continue to investigate options.

Stormwater recap from PC (Planning Commission) meeting 6/5/23. All CC members were present at the PC meeting and heard the stormwater presentation. A considerable discussion ensued with Melissa adding valuable input. Melissa is going to look into the feasibility of removing the catch basins at the east end of the Common. It was suggested that the surface water could be routed out the south side of the Common. An easement would be needed, and grading of the Common to direct the surface water. At this time, the Committee is not taking any action on these issues but will consider it in the future.

Safety/hazard analysis

Jeff LaBossiere, Loss Control Manager from VLCT (Town's insurance carrier), was planning to evaluate the Common for hazards on 6/7/2023. He was going to submit a report to the town administrator with a CC to Lori. This had not been received by the time of this meeting. One issue anticipated is the attachment and chains of the swings. Since the CC was not the organization that installed the swingset, the Committee feels that it is not our responsibility to maintain it. In addition, we are not the experts on what is required. Jeff had volunteered to take care of this last fall, but then learned from his boss that because of his work with VLCT he could not do it. Lori will ask the SB if the town will consider hiring someone for maintenance.

Public Comment-none

Adjourn at 11:03 am.