

Land Stewardship Committee Meeting
March 16, 2021
Via teleconference - 7:00 PM

Meeting Minutes

Present: Tom Brownrigg, Dwight DeMay, Debby Geltner, Warren Lyman, and Rhonda Michaud. Conservation Administrator Sylvia Willard was also present. Andrew Wilmot was absent.

Guests: Stephanie Koch, Alyson Becker, and Nick Ognibene

This meeting was conducted by Zoom teleconference due to the Covid-19 pandemic, with all participants at home. The meeting was opened at 7:05 PM by Chairman DeMay.

The February 16 meeting minutes were approved as amended.

New Business

1. Geocaching Proposal

Stephanie Koch and Alyson Becker of the Carlisle Education Foundation (CEF) attended the meeting to discuss a potential geocaching project for the Carlisle School. CEF funds special programs and events for the school, and one of the events being planned involves geocaching on town conservation lands. This event would probably be held during September through October, 2021. The geocaches would not be permanent, and would be removed after the event. Also, the site locations would not be posted on national websites.

Geltner asked if CEF is a non-profit organization, and Koch responded in the affirmative. Lyman requested that the geocache locations avoid areas with pink lady-slipper orchids. He also suggested that CEF check ConsCom rules regarding the size of groups, which might require a permit. Koch thought the groups would be mostly families with small children.

After discussion, LSC members seemed to agree that this was a good proposal. DeMay said CEF should submit a proposal to LSC and ConsCom four to six weeks prior to the start of the events, with proposed geocache locations. He also suggested they stay in contact with Willard regarding a Land Use permit.

2. Potential New Member: Nick Ognibene

Nick Ognibene joined the meeting at about 7:30 PM. He said that his application to join LSC has been approved by ConsCom, but still needs approval by the Select Board. DeMay asked members to introduce themselves and give their reasons for joining LSC. Nick said that he and his family moved to Carlisle in October, 2020 after living in various places both here and abroad.

He is originally from Dover, MA and his profession is environmental and trade law. LSC members again thanked Nick for his interest in the committee.

3. Consideration of the Draft 2020 OS&RP

David Freedman, Chair of the Open Space & Recreation Plan (OS&RP) Committee has rewritten Section 7C of the report titled "Management Needs, Potential Change of Use". After discussion, members provided comments. Lyman thought that the first section of the report that discusses which entities are responsible for which properties (ConsCom or RecCom) seemed fine, but he was less satisfied with the next section, "Management Priorities". He has provided comments to Freedman, and noted that Freedman did not ask LSC for its response as a committee. DeMay said that he also plans to submit comments to Freedman.

Lyman suggested members read the original text prepared by LSC and Freedman's version, and discuss LSC goals on a yearly basis. Freedman requested that all comments regarding the OS&RP be provided by the end of March. Lyman said LSC members should submit comments to both Freedman and Willard, with a copy to DeMay.

4. Baseline Assessments

Lyman explained baseline assessments for the benefit of potential new member Nick Ognibene. These assessments provide a summary of facts about conservation lands, and are best done when a property is newly acquired. A management plan would follow a baseline assessment.

Lyman said that he would work on a baseline assessment for the Benfield Land, which he agreed to do several years ago but has not made much progress. He decided to restrict this to Benfield, and not include the Bisbee Land, as originally planned. Geltner asked why he was not including Bisbee. Lyman said the two properties were well separated, although a BA for Bisbee could include the newly acquired Hartwell Woods off Hartwell Rd.

Brownrigg said he would work on a baseline assessment for the Woodward Land, which will soon include a much larger parcel (~33 acres) surrounding a new housing development. DeMay suggested that Judy Asarkof might help with this. Another newly acquired property, the Russell Land, is also in need of a baseline assessment.

5. Recap of March 15 Cranberry Working Group (CBWG) meeting

Lyman attended the meeting and provided a summary. The committee is close to formalizing a proposal to manage the Cranberry Bog as a natural wetland, with little change to the current topography. From a survey of bog walkers last year, one of the features most valued was the open vistas. However, if the bog fields are to be maintained by mowing and the bog is no longer in agriculture, the Wetlands Protection Act presents a challenge since mowing could be considered an "alteration" of a wetland, and subject to permitting.

Recently, CBWG hired a former Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) employee, MaryAnn DiPinto (correct spelling?), as a consultant. DiPinto believes that "there is a way

forward" through the DEP regulations by considering bog management as an ecological restoration. According to Willard, DEP modified its wetlands regulations in 2014 by adding section 310 CMR 10.12. This regulation permits wetland alterations involving removal of invasive plants and replacing these with native plants, among other types of projects that alter wetlands. Willard said that there have been three such ecological restoration projects in Carlisle to date. ConsCom will need to issue a Order of Conditions after every three (or possibly five) years in order to continue the permit. The CBWG plans to hold a public meeting on April 26 for questions and comments.

Old Business

1. Fox Hill Nursery Plants

Five American Hornbeams are still present on the west field. One tree had been tagged to be saved and the others removed, but John Bakewell did not do this as part of a tree removal operation last year. There was previous discussion of having the DPW remove the trees but this seems unlikely any time soon. No course of action was decided.

2. Conservation Land Maintenance Planning: Field Edges

Willard said that ConsCom has approved the agricultural licenses for conservation land fields, which include a requirement that the farmer leasing the field cut brush along field edges. Mark Duffy holds most of the licenses, but Dick Shohet has the license for Fox Hill fields. Judy Asarkof now has the license for the Woodward Land fields; the license was formerly held by Desiree Ball.

Brownrigg contacted Shohet regarding an interest in identifying plants on the west Fox Hill field. Shohet said that this was not a problem, since he does not like to mow the west field, which is too steep for his tractor. He employs a young man (a college student) who clears brush along field edges during the summer.

Other Business

1. Geltner mentioned that some conservation land signs have brush growing underneath, blocking the sign, and should be removed. She asked Willard if it is necessary to get permission from ConsCom for this activity. Willard replied: "Just do it".

2. Willard said that town employees and volunteers are getting ready for an upcoming Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) meeting on March 27. She asked members to think about threats resulting from climate change, and how these should be prioritized.

Next Meetings:

April 13, 2021 @ 7 PM

May 11, 2021 @ 7 PM

Document discussed at meeting:

- Proposed revision to OS&RP Section 7C: Management Needs, Potential Change of Use, D. Freedman

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 PM.

Submitted by Tom Brownrigg

Minutes approved: 4/13/21