

Weston Conservation Commission - Public Meeting Minutes

May 26, 2020

Approved: June 16, 2020

Members Participating Joseph Berman (chair), Alison Barlow, Cynthia Chapra, Rees Tulloss, Josh Feinblum, Rebecca Loveys, Ellen Freeman Roth, and Rees Tulloss
Conservation Staff: Michele Grzenda

Pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18, and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order concerning imposition on strict limitations on the number of people that may gather in one place, this Conservation Commission meeting was conducted via remote participation using Zoom.com. The Town provided access to such meeting via a link to call in. No in-person attendance of members of the public was permitted, but every effort was made to ensure that the public could adequately access the proceedings.

7:30 p.m. Discussion: Land Use Rules and signage for Wellington Farms

Josh Feinblum recused himself since he abuts the property but reserved his right to add comments as a general member of the public.

The Conservation Commission discussed proposed Conservation land rules for Wellington Farm. The Agent proposed prohibiting dogs and bicycles at Wellington Farm Conservation Area since the adjacent MWRA open space prohibits both activities and Waltham Fields Community Farms (who has a license to farm the agricultural fields) expressed concerns over dogs impacting farming activities.

Questions were raised regarding horseback riding. Julie Hyde, neighbor, encouraged the Commission to allow horseback riding be allowed at Wellington Farms as it has been an ongoing activity there for many years. Josh Feinblum, abutter, agreed that horses should continue to be allowed on Wellington Farm. However, Mr. Feinblum requested that dogs on leash be allowed on the main N-S trail along the easterly property line. Discussion ensued. Motion by Alison Barlow to prohibit bikes on the entire property and limit dogs to leash only on the main N-S trail only; seconded by Rees Tulloss Roll Call Vote taken: unanimous.

In addition, the Agent recommended that Wellington Farm be included in Weston's Deer Management program this fall. WFCF has experienced heavy deer damage and is supportive of the program. The Commission agreed to include Wellington Farm in their 2020 Hunting program.

8:05 p.m. Request to plant 3 native trees/shrubs at Middle school wetland; Tree Advisory Group

Nina Danforth from the Tree Advisory Group (TAG) requested to hand plant 3 plants in the river bank as soon as possible, with the largest being the Fifth-Grade class of 2027 tree, a native pussy willow. The one purchased is about 2' tall but TAG is hoping to find a 3-5' individual. The other two will be red osier dogwoods, also native, about 3' tall. TAG has requested permission from the School Committee and they hope that further restoration of this area with wetland natives can take place in the coming years. Motion by Ellen Freeman Roth to allow TAG to plant 3 shrubs in the wetland area by hand; seconded by Alison Barlow; Roll call vote: unanimous.

8:15 p.m. Overcrowding of Gun Club Ln. parking area to access Rail Trail and Jericho Town Forest

Paul Penfield from the Rail trail advisory committee presented some history of the topic. When RTAC was researching areas to expand Rail Trail parking, the Warren Ave. neighborhood expressed concern about allowing additional use of the Warren Ave/Gun Club Lane area due to traffic and speed concerns. Because of this, the RTAC did not expand the existing parking lot. However, as a practical matter, people

in town have been using it for many years and since the completion of the rail trail, and in particular once Covid 19 began, the neighborhood has seen an increase of use. The parking lot is filled on numerous occasions and overflow parking along the roadway shoulder has caused concerns over safety and emergency access. Mr. Penfield has been trying to reach out to the fire chief and determine if the fire dept can label it a “fire lane”. The Agent recommended a meeting be held b/w with the immediate neighbors, fire dept., WFTA, and Con Com. The Conservation Department can help facilitate the discussion and report back to the Commission at a later date. The Commission agreed to that plan.

8:40 p.m. Informational discussion – proposed concept plan for 154 Winter Street

The owners and their representatives reviewed a proposed landscaping and patio work proposal. David Crossman, wetland scientist, reviewed the wetland resource areas. A pond exists in close proximity to the back of the house and the owners wish to install a fence, native plantings, and construct a larger patio, Significant vegetation planting plan is proposed which Mr. Crossman believed will be an overall net improvement. The owners will prepare a Notice of Intent in order for the Commission to formally review.

9:00 p.m. Request for Administrative Approval – Horse Paddock Maintenance; 368 Highland Street

The owner wishes to hire Anza Outdoor Solutions to conduct maintenance activities within a horse paddock area. The work involves cutting back the field edge, remove tree stumps, and, using a farm rake, smooth out the horse paddock, no material will be brought onto the site. The Commission considers this normal maintenance of a farm paddock and did not require a formal filing for this activity.

9:15 p.m. Draft Policy - Leaf and landscaping dumping on Conservation Land.

The Agent and Conservation Assistant reviewed the leaf and landscaping dumping policy recently drafted. The hope is to streamline the Conservation Commission’s process regarding this kind of encroachment and be consistent. The policy includes (2) sending a friendly/educational letter if a complaint about leaf/landscape dumping is received; (2) assess the area if deemed moderate or significant and if so, a more direct letter with removal requirements will be sent. The policy gives a framework to move forward and doesn’t change the overall process by which the Conservation Dept. has been handling these to date. Josh Feinblum suggested changing may to ‘will’ after moderate to severe.

Motion by cc to approve the policy as amended; seconded by Ellen Freeman Roth; Roll Call Vote taken: unanimous.

9:30 p.m. Admin. Matters

1. Land Management Updates discussed -
 - o Tree pruning work completed at 40-acre field
 - o Juniper Road Field - Field edge work occurring
 - o Case Estates - clearing along rock walls and specimen trees complete
2. 16 Carroll circle – appeal of tree removal denial decision, Cont. from 5/12/20 – landowner did not attend. The Commission considers their decision on 5/12/20 final.
3. Electronically Signing of Documents:
 - o Re-sign Cert. of Compliance: 153 Wellesley Street; 337-17
 - o Re-Sign Cert. of Compliance: 20 Beaver Road 337-1010
 - o Letter of Commitment – Climate Compact MVP Grant.
4. Approval 5/12/20 Con Com minutes; motion by Ellen Freeman Roth to approve; seconded by Rees Tulloss; roll call vote: each member responded Aye
5. Permission to cut down or trim up dead Ash trees along town Trail right of way – Ogilvie Town Forest – the Commission was ok with the owner of 77 Sudbury Road topping 1-2 hazard ash trees.

Meeting adjourned at 10:00 p.m.