

Weston Conservation Commission - Public Meeting Minutes
October 27, 2020
Approved: November 10, 2020

Members Participating Joseph Berman (Chair), Alison Barlow, Cynthia Chapra, Josh Feinblum, Ellen Freeman Roth, Rees Tulloss
Members Absent Rebecca Loveys
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.

7:32 p.m. Case Estates Ecological Management Plan - Discussion and Anticipated Vote

Emily Schadler, Conservation Program Stewardship Coordinator, presented the final draft of the Case Estates Ecological Management Plan (EMP). The Case Estates is divided into several parcels; some of which are owned and managed by Conservation Commission and other parcels owned by the Select Board. The EMP was prepared by Mass Audubon and Emily Schadler and focuses on 7 short-term goal for the Case Estates: improve the meadows for pollinator habitat; reduce invasive plant infestations to minimize spreading and improve habitat quality; manage field edges to retain the extents of the fields; maintain stone walls for scenic qualities; protect specimen trees and shrubs, including both historic and recent plantings; welcome passive recreational users to the property, including users of all mobility levels; and accomplish the management activities as efficiently and economically as possible. A matrix is included with the recommendations, priority level, cost estimate some of the priorities involve changing the mowing schedule to benefit pollinator plants and wildlife, removal of brush along the rock walls, consideration of allowing deer hunting, restricting dogs to leash only; and several invasive species managements projects.

Discussion ensued regarding the proposal to leash is to limit dogs to short on-leash only, not only on the Case Estates land, but also on the School land and Chestnut Street Conservation Land. Josh Feinblum and Alison Barlow proposed to consider prohibiting dogs from the entire collection of properties surrounding the Case Estates. Other WCC members suggested the Commission only restrict dogs to leash on the case estates, but that the rule be reconsidered in 12 months. K. Barbieri, resident, encourages leash-only for Case Estates and woodland school but allow dogs to be off-leash on the Chestnut Street property. Ann Wiedie, resident, suggested considered allowing a hybrid plan where dogs are allowed on leash certain days and off-leash other days. It is Joe Berman's suggestion that the Commission vote to require leash only on Case Estates and that commission take up the Chestnut Street parcel later. Motion by Ellen Freeman Roth to require dogs at Case Estates to be limited dogs on 6-foot leash; and that the Commission revisit this in 6 months; seconded by Rees Tulloss. roll call vote: 5:1:0. Josh Feinblum and Alison Barlow expressed concern over the number of uncontrolled dogs on conservation land.

Discussion went back to the overall approval of the plan. Discussion ensued. Ann Wiedie asked how the invasive species would be removed. Ms. Schadler reviewed some of the different strategies listed in the plan. Nina Danforth asked questions about the invasive plants in the Nose and asked whether anyone is responsible for the identification and monitoring of the specimen trees and recently planted trees. One of the goals involves hiring an arborist to conduct an inventory, funding dependent. The Commission thanked Emily Schadler for her tireless effort in compiling this comprehensive plan. Joe Berman indicated that the EMP will be a flexible plan and changes can happen. Motion by Cynthia Chapra to

adopt and approve the draft plan; seconded by Ellen Freeman Roth; roll call vote: each member responded Aye. If there are significant changes made, Ms. Schadler will review those changes with the commission. The Agent will bring back a proposed FY22 budget recommendation at a future meeting.

8:40 p.m. Land Management – Proposed Boardwalk Construction

Daniel Brown, Eagle Scout proposes to construct a boardwalk on a muddy spot on a trail on a trail easement on 455 Concord Road. Mr. Brown is working closely with WFTA and Rees Tulloss on the design and parameters of the boardwalk. Motion by Rees Tulloss to approve the boardwalk project; seconded by Josh Feinblum; roll call vote: each member responded Aye.

8:30 p.m. Conservation Field Assessment and Discussion of Goals

Michele Grzenda, Conservation Administrator, presented an overview of her assessment of the 26 fields owned and managed by the Conservation Commission. To help with determining Weston field management goals and recommendations, Michele utilized the MCA publication: “Field Management: Mowing Strategies to Maintain Ecologically Valuable Fields” produced by Matt Morris of SVT. Ms. Grzenda identified 4 main field management goals and several challenges in managing fields. She then outlined proposed management outcomes for FY21 Rob Mosher and Charlie Hamlin, Weston-Wayland Rotary Club are interested in helping the Commission with their field management projects. Nina appreciated the assessment the Agent conducted and suggested the WCC consider allowing grazing as a management too. Barbara Fullerton appreciate the work done; expressed her concern over herbicides but recognizes at times that herbicide is an important tool in invasive species management. Ms. Fullerton suggested that milkweed plant may be more palatable if mowed early, and allowed to grow back. Discussion ensued. Before endorsing the 10 management outcomes for FY21, the WCC requested a copy of the slides and a summary of the proposal to review more thoroughly. The matter will be taken up at a future meeting.

9:50 p.m. Proposed Forest Management – Ogilvie Town forest

Brian Donahue, Associate Member, has been working with Land’s Sake to identify and plan the 2021 forestry management near intersections 1,4, 5, and 3 at Ogilvie Town Forest. Marking about a quarter of the trees that will be thinned out over the next two years. Mr. Donahue will file a plan with the state, hold a public walk, and Land’s Sake will cut the area over the winter months. Motion by Alison Barlow to approve the proposed forestry plan as described; seconded by Josh Feinblum; roll call vote: each member responded Aye.

10:00 p.m. Proposed amendments to the Weston Conservation Commission’s Land Use Policy

Motion by Rees Tulloss to codify August ** Vote to require that dogs be prohibited at Wellington Farms with the exception that dogs may be walked on leash along the main N-S trail along the easterly boundary; seconded by Josh Feinblum; roll call vote: each member responded Aye.

Next Conservation Commission Meeting: November 10, 2020.

Meeting adjourned at 10:05 p.m.