

Land Stewardship Subcommittee Meeting Minutes for December 8, 2022

1. The Meeting was called to order at 8:32 am by Ann Welsh.

Members Attending: Mike Evergam, Mike Drooker (on Zoom), Marty Gorham, Gale Carey, Sally Tobias, Ann Welsh, Larry Brickner Wood, John Nachilly. **Absent:** Sally Needell, John Carroll. **Also attending:** Tom Brightman and Todd Selig.

2. The meeting agenda was approved unanimously.

3. Changes to minutes for November 10, 2023:

Correction to Item #5 3rd paragraph:

The Stevens Woods discussion included the suggestion that there be an effort to coordinate with the UNH Woodlands Committee over maintenance of the trails that connect to Town trails. The UNH Woodlands Committee oversees woodlands throughout NH. The LSS discussion led to wondering if it would be appropriate to have a request from the Durham's Conservation Commission asking to help coordinate our activities with the group making the decisions.

Correction to Item #7 HDC/HC Report:

Plans for new roofing for the building at WHF are proceeding; another LCHIP grant for the building at WHF is being pursued, and the committee is working with the Section 106 Committee on the Mill Pond Dam removal process.

4. Land Stewardship Coordinator update-Tom Brightman

Introduction of Sarah Callahan, Durham's new Land Stewardship Coordinator. She and Tom are working together during the transition leading to Tom leaving at the end of December.

a. Easement Inspection Updates: All are complete except for the Fogg Property easement. LCHIP has approved the required paperwork for the Oyster River/Spruce Wood easement, and they should be sending the Town \$500, as they do annually (unless LCHIP has made a change).

b. Trail Steward meeting update

- Trails are generally in good shape, though may need some bridge work.
- Via the Town property questionnaires, forty-six people have expressed interest in being involved in trail maintenance and/or trail stewardship. The current plan is to set volunteers up in teams for each property.
- There is a plan to request monthly reports from trail stewards to identify trail maintenance issues and to log volunteer hours. Hours may be used in future grant processing. Eventually monthly records may be information to be collected from each team, not just one trail steward.

c. Thompson Forest Meadow Mowing: Meadow mowing is about half complete. Returning the land to meadow will benefit the site. In the future regular mowing and equipment better adapted to the challenges of the lumbering and mowing may make it easier to maintain the land.

5. Introduction and Welcome of Sara Callaghan: Sara described her experience with land stewardship and conservation work.

6. Change of meeting time and day: 4th Tuesday of each month at 8:30 am.

7. Housing Ordinance Amendments: Sally Tobias introduced the Housing Ordinance Amendments from the Planning Board. Sally shared a PowerPoint presentation of primary changes. The committee was asked to consider how the amendments will impact Town-owned lands while listening to the presentation.

Suggestions:

- Have an overlay map showing the recommended changes to assess potential impacts on greenways.
- Assess/determine the number of units projected to have a better understanding of the level of need in Durham.
- Consider the Impact of smaller lot sizes on waterway protections from stormwater runoff and faulty septic systems.
- Consider whether or not Durham has the necessary resources to support more families including schools, water, wastewater, solid waste, etc.
- Open land protection would be an issue. The importance of survey boundaries for protecting open land. There should be some controls of development management including specific rules for easements and identifying the responsible parties.
- Repurposing buildings in Durham as housing should be considered.
- Use GIS to look at the developable land based on tax records to get an idea of the existing housing availability and potential availability with the amendments.

8. Reports from Committees:

Reports were made by the Trustees, Parks and Rec, Conservation Committee, HDC/HC
Mike Everngam thanked Gale Carey for the work of the working group on quantifying the use of Doe Farm.

9. Other Updates: Todd Seig did a presentation of plans for the Portsmouth Water System crossing of Wagon Hill Farm that will connect Portsmouth's Water System in the Bay.

It was suggested that some of the improvements are made they should be made permanent, if they will benefit future use of Wagon Hill Farm.

Also, the trail along the temporary roadway may need to be closed to protect the public.

The potential future trail might allow for universal access.

The trail and the roadway should be combined into one roadway.

Berms should be covered with turf only to help native plants to establish themselves and to reduce the introduction of invasive species.

Payment by Portsmouth to Durham for the use of Wagon Hill Farm will go into the ARM fund, from which Durham may seek funds through grants.

Regional Greenway strategies - John Nachilly is working with Bart McDonough and Ellen Snyder in Newmarket to develop a trail for connections between our two towns and to allow for safe bike path travel.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 10:37.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, January 24th at 8:30 AM in the Town Council Chambers

