

Land Stewardship Subcommittee Meeting Minutes for February 28, 2023

1. The Meeting was called to order at 8:31 am by Ann Welsh.

Members Attending: Mike Evergam, Mike Drooker (on Zoom), Marty Gorham, Gale Carey, Sally Tobias, Ann Welsh, Sally Needell, and John Carroll (Zoom). **Absent:** John Nachilly and Larry Brickner-Wood. **Also attending:** Sara Callaghan(Zoom), Todd Selig, Rich Reine, Ted Howard, and Rachel Gasowski (Zoom)

2. The Agenda was changed to allow the Portsmouth Waterline Presentation to go first before other items due to the snowstorm. **The changed agenda was approved unanimously.**

4. Portsmouth Waterline Presentation-Brian Goetz (Assistant Director of Portsmouth DPW) and Britt Eckstrom (Wright-Pierce Civil Project Manager)

- Todd Selig introduced the presenters and their presentation of the Portsmouth Waterline and the updated access road plans for Wagon Hill Farm (WHF).
- The waterline is a regional water system serving many cities and towns.
- 70% of the water used by these municipalities is carried by the waterline from the Bellamy Reservoir
- The current Little Bay water transmission line is split into two lines under the bay so that one may be serviced while the other carries water. The valves that control the water flow have not been turned in 60 years. To safely work on the valves, a third line needs to be put in place beneath Little Bay.
- A 24-inch PVC pipe, held down by cement blocks, will be put down across the bay.
- The Army Corps of Engineers and other environmental agencies require the use of a cofferdam to protect oysters and other aquatic life.
- The work period would take place between December and March.
- Most of the work would take place in Newington, and the pipe would be floated across the bay to Durham.
- Barge operators recommended against attempting to do the needed work from the water.
- With the new waterline, Portsmouth will also provide water connection to the Chesley-Bickford house.

New Access Road Plan

- A temporary access road will be constructed starting from Route 4 near the eastern edge of the WHF property.
- Two laydown areas for equipment will be placed near the Route 4 entrance, reducing the size of the laydown area needed at the end of the access road.
- The stonewall at Route 4 will be moved temporarily.
- In order to work within the wetlands and the grade of the slope, the access road will not be straight or directly parallel the eastern property boundary until it reaches the height of land.
- The access road will not be needed after completion of the work, will be removed, and vegetation will be planted.
- A temporary gate will be in place on Route 4 at the entrance to the access road.
- A temporary fence will separate the access road from the pedestrian trail.
- After a discussion it was decided that where the access road will narrow as it approaches the water the trail will be closed to walkers for their safety and also so that the roadway will not need to be widened to include a pedestrian trail. From there, walkers will be able to connect to other trails using an existing trail that cuts across the field.

- Durham's plans for the new trail bridge at WHF will be supported by funding from Portsmouth. This work will be completed during the driest part of the year-July or August at the earliest. If necessary the bridge work will be delayed in order for it to be coordinated with Portsmouth's work.
- NH DOT has been contacted regarding plans for the new entrance off of route 4.
- Portsmouth has been given \$600,000 of federal funds by Representative Chris Pappas
- The project will cost approximately \$7,000,000.
- Surveying data collected by Portsmouth along the eastern boundary with the abutter will be shared with Durham.
- The public will need to be educated about the project with signs at WHF and notifications in Friday Updates.

3. The minutes of January, 2022 with changes were approved unanimously.

4. Land Stewardship Coordinator Update- Sara Callaghan

- Work has focused on the Oyster River-Spruce Hole Bog, Longmarsh Preserve, and Jackson's Landing properties.
- She has met with the Doe Farm Trustees regarding plans for removing invasives.*
- She is coordinating volunteer workdays.
- She is talking with UNH professors who would like to use WHF for case studies.
- She was asked by the LSC to look into what work may be continuing to take place with UNH students in the Spruce Hole Bog.
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- *Mike Evergam explained the plans for removing the buckthorn from Doe Farm. The removal of buckthorn in 2023 will exhaust the funding from the sale of the red pine timber harvest. Rather than continue the annual treatment of buckthorn as it has been in past years, in 2023, a cluster of large buckthorns located at the north side of the property, and the source of much of the seed, will be cut and treated with herbicide. This new approach will go after the seed source. New funding will need to be sought for future dealing with the buckhorn on the property.

5. Update on the Land Stewardship Coordinator Transition-Sara Callaghan

- Working with Rich Reine on plans for WHF
- Improving access to trail information online with GIS
- Planning opportunities for Nature Groupie interns' work for a few weeks in June.
- Meeting with Steve Eisenhauer regarding UNH properties
- Sara plans to shift some of her time and energy towards grant writing

6. Stewardship Working Group Updates-Gale Carey

- Sara Callaghan has sent a letter out to people who indicated their interest in being involved in stewarding town properties via the town property questionnaires.
- Gale shared results from the Oyster River Forest (ORF) and Spruce Hole questionnaire and recommendations for the properties. Recommendations are for more trail markers, additional educational signage, and protections to reduce erosion and overuse.
- Due to requirements of funding sources, ORF is open to hunting, and so dogs are not required to be on leashes on the property. However leashes are required on the Spruce Hole property.
- A discussion followed regarding hunting at ORF. One concern was the proximity to houses. UNH does allow hunting, but hunters must request permission from UNH. UNH has a set number of permits. Proper signage regarding hunting and dogs on and off leash need work.
- Trail counters are up at three locations in ORF.

7. Properties Needing Surveys

- Members were asked to rank the surveying needs of town properties. The properties of greatest priority are Jackson's Landing, Stolworthy Wildlife Sanctuary, and WHF.
- Parks and Rec plan to use the Stolworthy property this summer, and Rachel was encouraged to check with property owners at each end of the Stolworthy land.
- The surveying of The Meadows, Milne Nature Sanctuary, and Mill Pond Park should wait until after the dam has been removed.
- A motion to approve surveying and monumentation at Jackson's Landing passed unanimously.
- Funding for surveying and monumentation need to be sought.

9. Reports from Committees:

- Agriculture: Discussion of Durham's Climate Action Mitigation Plans
- Planning Board: Reviewing Zoning Ordinance definitions. The Housing Task Force has been awarded \$25,000 to support their work.
- Parks and Rec: Durham Day will be on June 3, 2023. There are plans for a presentation on community input for parks and playgrounds
- Town Council: Gail Jablonski gave a presentation of the final financial report. An amendment to the Durham Community Power Electric Aggregation Plan was approved.

10. Adjournment.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:25 am, The motion passed unanimously.

NEXT MEETING: Tuesday, March 28, 2023 at 8:30 am.