

LAND STEWARDSHIP SUBCOMMITTEE
Town Hall Chambers – 8 Newmarket Road
Meeting Minutes for May 8, 2024

Members Attending: Ann Welsh, John Carroll, Darrell Ford, Ted Howard, and Marty Gorham.

Absent: Gale Carey, Myrta Janosz, Larry Brickner-Wood, and John Nachilly.

Also attending: Sara Callaghan, Rich Reine, Todd Selig, and Rachel Gasowski

1. The Meeting was called to order at 8:30 am by Ann Welsh.
2. The order of the meeting agenda was approved.
3. The minutes for the April 10, 2024 meeting were reviewed and approved.
4. Public Works Director Rich Reine presented an update on projects at Wagon Hill Farm.

The City of Portsmouth water line project is progressing with the Phase-1 valve replacement scheduled to be completed in June. Timing for Phase-2, the water line replacement should occur within two years. The temporary access road, some areas with timber mats, will be maintained in place for the Phase-2 work.

The Portsmouth water main will be tapped during the week of May 20th for a water line to the Bickford-Chesley House. The new line will be used for potable water and a fire-protection system.

The Wagon Hill Farm Shoreline Phase-2 improvements design work is substantially complete, the permitting process is underway, and a 2025 construction start is anticipated.

Sara stated that the shoreline will require ongoing monitoring and maintenance.

5. Longmarsh Preserve

The poor condition of some of the bog bridges was discussed. It was decided that the existing bridges should be repaired in kind. Some members expressed the desire to develop a plan to replace the bridges in the future with a more durable design.

Members voted and approved a motion to request funds from the conservation commission to repair the existing bog bridges that are in poor condition.

6. Land Stewardship Coordinator Sara Callaghan Updates

Sara is collaborating with members of the Conservation Commission on a proposal to create a Stewardship Education and Engagement Committee with the goal of providing opportunities for residents to learn about and connect with the natural environment and to responsibly steward our backyards, parks, and conservation lands.

Completed a site walk at Oyster River Forest in response to reports from trail stewards about downed trees blocking the trails and communicated needs to DPW.

Lead three successful workdays, including:

- Trail Work along the yellow trail with the Air Force ROTC.
- Removal of fencing at the Pike Property with the ATO fraternity.
- Clean-up at the Milne Nature Sanctuary with a Leadership Class from UNH.

Sara met with Jeremy Howland, PhD candidate at Longmarsh Preserve to help collect lichen samples and learn the process and goals of his research project.

Sara presented results from the Longmarsh Preserve trail counter usage survey to the LSSC.

7. Reports from Committees

Recreation

Durham Day will be held downtown on June 22nd between 12:30 and 3:00.

Agricultural Commission

Suggest having an advocate to support private land stewardship activities.

AC is promoting “No Mow May” and “Leaving Leaves on the Ground” campaigns.

Conservation Commission

The CC is looking for a member from the LSSC to join a working group, tentatively named the Stewardship Education and Engagement working group. A five hour monthly commitment is anticipated.

8. Other

Ann suggested initiating a long term parking survey/traffic count at Wagon Hill Farm.

9. The meeting was adjourned at 10:45 am.

The next meeting is planned for Wednesday, June 12, 2024 at 8:30 am in the Town Hall Chambers.