

Wellfleet Open Space Committee Minutes January 24, 2024 -- Zoom Meeting

Present (via Zoom): John Grieb, chair; Bruce Hurter, vice chair; Peggy Sagan; Liz MacDonald; Tom Slack.

Guest: Denny O'Connell, WCT

Meeting called to order 4:33 PM

Agenda approved with one correction.

Minutes of December meeting approved.

Chair report (J. Grieb): John announced that the Town Conservation Agent, Beth Pyles, has submitted her resignation after 3 months on the job. He also encouraged Committee members to attend the Southeast Mass Land Trust Convocation on February 3. (He forwarded the invitation prior to the meeting.)

Vice-Chair Report (B. Hurter): Nothing to report.

Standing Assignments

Property Management (B. Hurter): Bruce said he and John have been working with Jen Elsensohn on recording results of property inspections, using a template that John created. Going forward, data will be entered directly into the template so that it is easier to report infractions and monitor whether they have been resolved. Three infractions Bruce noted on recent inspections were a well head located on what appears to be Town property on Old Wharf Road, brush and birdhouses at Turtle Point (Lt. Island), and an abandoned boat at Pleasant Point (tagged several months ago by the Harbor Master). Bruce and John will continue to work with Jen to develop procedures for investigating/resolving infractions.

Trail Guides (P. Sagan): Nothing to report.

Community Outreach (P. Sagan): Peggy heard back from Adam O'Shea that we can work directly with the teachers to plan and schedule this year's classroom activities. Peggy and Denny have coordinated schedules, and they will send an email to the three teachers to begin planning.

Liaison Reports

WCT (J. Grieb): John attended the WCT meeting yesterday and gave an update on OSC. He asked Denny to bring the committee up to date on WCT activities. Denny reported that the January 1 walk, led by Bill Iacuesa, was well attended. He said that Bill is stepping down as Vice-Chair, and that there will be vacant seats on the Board if we know of anyone who is interested. Planning for 2024 includes work on the Strategic Plan, with a focus on ensuring that procedures protect the organization's Tax-Exempt status; launching an Adopt-a-Highway program; and preparing for the Fall walk and Annual meeting.

Friends of Herring River (T. Slack): Tom reported that construction of the temporary bridge is complete and that utility cables will be run across the bridge. Ducks Unlimited has provided the

National Seashore with money to assist with the cleanup of another 40 acres at the over-wash area at Duck Harbor. The Friends have been encouraged by reports that salt water aquatic plants are beginning to replace the fresh water plants in the reclaimed portion, which continues to flood at very high tides.

Housing Partnership (B. Hurter): The last meeting was cancelled due to Zoom problems. Bruce said that the Partnership is looking at properties owned by the Town (or privately held) that might be suitable for affordable housing. One possibility is the Town-owned landing strip located within the National Seashore at Marconi, approximately 44 acres. The main concern is access, since it is not clear that the land abuts the road. If issues of access could be resolved, there could be the possibility for a land swap for property elsewhere within the Seashore.

CPC (J. Grieb): John informed the Committee that the proposal for the Wellfleet Land Conservation Fund has been vetted by Town Counsel and presented to the CPC for approval. Earlier, CPC approved our proposal for \$25,000 for removal of the derelict structure on Blue Heron. The DPW has agreed to perform the bulk of the work, but the CPC money provides a cushion for unforeseen expenses. Once the structure is removed and the land is restored, the property will be transferred to care and custody of ConsCom.

John also asked the Committee to approved the “Open Space Needs” list, which ConsCom revised with new wording for item 10, to read: “Acquire conservation restrictions or fee title to coastal land that allows inland migration of coast wetlands with sea-level rise.” The new wording was accepted unanimously. Denny warned the Committee that Conservation Restrictions are a complicated business, and he said that WCT could provide guidance or handle the process if the opportunity arises.

NRAB (T. Slack): Tom said the Board is meeting in a few days and he hopes to have more to report next time. They are talking to a potential consultant to develop the plan and budget for the Harbor study.

Old Business

5-year Plan: John said that he would like the Planning Committee to complete its work this winter, and he asked that we resume meetings. Peggy will get a meeting scheduled before she leaves town.

Peggy reported that John Portnoy reviewed the Wildlife section of the previous 5-year plan and made minor revisions. She said that John P. mentioned that another member of ConsCom is a former geologist. John G. and Denny identified him as Robert Stewart. Peggy will contact Robert and ask him to review the section on Geology of Wellfleet.

Peggy also mentioned that we need a written summary of the Town Open Space Forum to include in the 5-Year Plan. She will draft something.

Recruitment of New Committee Members. John has been in contact with Kathleen Delohery, who had planned to audit today’s meeting. He said she appears very interested in serving on the Committee. John will reach out to both Kathleen and Cindy Batchelder to keep them engaged. Peggy suggested that John encourage them to submit their applications now, since it may take

the Select Board a while to consider and approve their applications. Denny mentioned that the Select Board sees auditing meetings as a “selling point” when considering applicants for committees.

Titles on Properties in ConsCom Care. Bruce questioned whether private properties that have been transferred to ConsCom would be better protected if we filed for a “Conservation Deed.” Denny said that to protect the land, we need to tie it to Chapter 97 of the Commonwealth Constitution. It might involve reissuing the deed, but otherwise no costs are involved and there’s no need to go back to the original parties.

Properties for Consideration

Not discussed.

Next Meeting – Tuesday, February 20

Meeting adjourned 5:28 PM

*Respectfully submitted,
Peggy Sagan, Secretary*