

TOWN OF GROTON
Conservation Commission
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Groton Conservation Commission
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, March 9, 2021 @ 6:30 p.m.
Virtual Meeting

BROADCAST ON ZOOM AND THE GROTON CHANNEL
PURSUANT TO GOVERNOR'S EXECUTIVE ORDER
CONCERNING THE OPEN MEETING LAW

Present: Larry Hurley, Chair; Bruce Easom, Vice Chair; Eileen McHugh, Olin Lathrop, Peter Morrison, John Smigelski, Allison Hamilton; Clerk

Absent: None

Others Present: Nikolis Gualco, Conservation Administrator

6:30 PM- Chairman Larry Hurley called the meeting to order.

1. APPOINTMENTS AND HEARINGS

6:30 PM – Discussion with Chief McCurdy on prescribed burns at Shattuck Homestead.

Chief Steele McCurdy reiterated on a discussion from last year regarding a prescribed burn at the Shattuck Homestead off of Martins Pond Road, proposing it would be beneficial for training new firemen in regards of behavior and how it spreads. The controlled burn would also provide treatment to any invasive vegetation and allowing for new growth.

P. Morrison commented he would be interested in seeing what occurs.

B. Easom questioned if there are any precautions set in place to prevent the fire from getting out of control. S. McCurdy assured the Commission that there would be a significant number of firemen and equipment present to extinguish the fire. Topography and winds would be also be accounted for before igniting the fire.

J. Smigelski commented that this type of land management is applied in the blueberry fields in Maine and has been used for many years.

A. Hamilton questioned why the fire department is requesting this and not a wildlife manager. S. McCurdy believes that it is a good partnership, explaining the prescribed burn would aid in training and allow renewing and rejuvenating of vegetation. A. Hamilton then questioned the process. S. McCurdy stated that 1/2 of an acre would be ignited including natural breaks in the topography and stated no soil would be disturbed.

O. Lathrop was excited to partake in this type of land management and requested to be notified when the prescribed fire would take place so it could be recorded. S. McCurdy explained that there is a small window and it would be a last minute decision. S. McCurdy stated the identical process may be applied to treat the invasive Buckthorn identified at the Jay Harry Rich Forest and is currently working with the Mass DCR.

N. Gualco notified both the Commission and S. McCurdy that he received a letter from the State and they have applied a timeline restriction to the prescribed burn and it is required to take place before May 1st.

S. McCurdy commented that there were a lot of down trees in the field and questioned if they could be used for chainsaw training. L. Hurley explained that the trees had been removed from the field and set aside. L. Hurley then approved the request for cutting the trees for training purposes.

6:50 PM – NOI (cont.), 85 Boathouse Road, for repairs and renovations of existing retaining walls, deck, and parking area, MassDEP#169-1213.
Applicant: Mark & Donna Enright

N. Gualco reported to the Commission that an engineer had visited the site and would be prepared to present at the next public hearing.

Upon a motion by P. Morrison, seconded by J. Smigelski, it was:
Voted to continue the hearing to the next public meeting on March 23, 2021.
The motion passed by a roll call vote: (Yes: PM, BE, OL, AH, EM, JS, LH)

2. GENERAL BUISNESS

General Discussions

Sign Lost Lake CR (Paul Revere Trail, Pine Trail, Park Trail)

N. Gualco stated that the Trust is planning on selling a parcel of land and the Commission had previously discussed changing the language in the CR to allow the passage of wildlife under the fence. That language has been updated and signed by the Trust.

Upon a motion by P. Morrison, seconded by A. Hamilton, it was:
Voted to approve and accept the Conservation Restriction for Lost Lake (Paul Revere Trail, Pine Trail, and Park Trail).
The motion passed by a roll call vote: (Yes: OL, BE, PM, AH, EM, JS, LH)

Land Management

Report on snow mobile at the Throne (N. Gualco)

N. Gualco updated the Commission that he received a notification from a concerned resident that a snowmobile was parked on the acquired Conservation Land near Throne Hill. As of last week, it was no longer present. N. Gualco believes that overall the property is not being overrun by snowmobiles. The Commission had a brief discussion if legal actions should be sought; B. Easom and N. Gualco agreed to review the topic at a later date.

Martins Pond Brook Conservation Area (a.k.a., Fuccillio land)

N. Gualco recommended that the Commission assign members to draft the language for the CR.

B. Easom and O. Lathrop both volunteered to draft the language for the CR. B. Easom stated he is very familiar with the parcel. The Commission requested confirmation from the Geld Property if access to the entrance of the parcel is still permitted by crossing their driveway.

Committee Updates

B. Easom reported that the CPA approved the recommendation of \$350,000. There was conversation about decreasing the amount however, it did not occur. The Conservation application received the highest rating of all the applications submitted. The \$1.4 million requested for the school will be bonded for five years and the debt service payment will commence in the fiscal 2023. \$180,000 debt services are now freed up from the payoff of the Surrenden Farms. B. Easom recommended attending the Town Meeting on May 1, 2021.

O. Lathrop stated that the Forest Legacy Grant has made progress and in the upcoming months there will be things transpiring.

O. Lathrop discussed the 14.5 acre reserve parcel located at the Surrenden Farm, explaining that the parcel was left over and not protected. A deal had been made with Groton School originally stating if the land were to be developed causing an

increase in traffic they could force the Town to close the road. Essentially the land cannot be used for housing. O. Lathrop proposed that the parcel should be purchased by the Forest Legacy Program, the Town would donate the land to the legacy at Yellow Book standard value and 25% of that value would be accounted for and the Forest Service would fund the remaining 75%. The Commission discussed pursuing the Forest Legacy Program and recommended that the land not be transferred to the Conservation Commission as requested in the Citizen Petition. The Forest Legacy holds the most value and will not accept land if it has already been protected. O. Lathrop stated that the Forest Legacy Program is made up of 10 towns working together to submit a total of 1000 acres. A large parcel has been claimed in Groton and will be discussed at the next meeting on March 15, 2021. The Commission suggested that N. Shapiro and Al Futterman be invited to the next public meeting. O. Lathrop commented he would also speak with Becky Pine to officially request to be added to the Select Boards agenda.

Invoices

Upon a motion by E. McHugh, seconded by P. Morrison, it was:
Voted to approve the expenditure of \$1000 to the Trail Committee for the purchase of a new leaf blower.

The motion passed by a roll call vote: (Yes: EM, PM, BE, AH, JS, OL, LH)

Approve Meeting Minutes

Upon a motion by B. Easom, seconded by P. Morrison, it was:
Voted to approve the meeting minutes for February 9, 2021 as amended.

The motion passed by a roll call vote: (Yes: BE, PM, OL, AH, JS, EM, LH)

Upon a motion by B. Easom, seconded by P. Morrison, it was:
Voted to approve the meeting minutes for February 23, 2021 as amended.

The motion passed by a roll call vote: (Yes: OL, BE, JS, EM, AH, PM, LH)

3. Open Session for topics not reasonably anticipated 48 hours in advance of meeting*

N. Gualco updated the Commission he received a letter from Sara Stanwood an Occupational Therapist who is requesting to operate an outdoor summer camp on Conservation Land. The Commission had a brief discussion and ensued more information is required to make an appropriate decision and any questions should be forwarded to N. Gualco who then will submit them to S. Stanwood prior to the next meeting.

L. Hurley stated that the Conservation Trust is appealing the Conservation Commissions approval for the NOI for Shepley Hills to the DEP. B. Easom commented that the Trust is

appealing the Wetlands Protection Act and not the Wetland Bylaws. N. Gualco stated he received an email and a phone call from the Trust which explained the reasoning against the application for the limited project and would forward that to the Commissioners for review.

4. Executive Session pursuant to MGL Ch. 30A, Sec. 21(6): * “To consider the purchase, exchange, lease, or value of real estate, if the chair declares that an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the public body.”

The Chair declared that there was business that required the Commission move to Executive Session.

5. Adjournment

7:47 Upon a motion by P. Morrison, seconded O. Lathrop, it was:
Voted to move to Executive Session and not to return to the open session for the purpose of considering the purchase, exchange, lease, or value of real estate, as the chair had declared that an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the Commission. **The motion passed by a roll call vote: (Yes: OL, BE, JS, EM, PM, AH, LH)**

Minutes Approved: April 13, 2021