

Minutes of Town of Conway Open Space (OSC) Committee Meeting

Thursday, Jan 31, 2024 6 PM Via Zoom

Members In Attendance: Janet Chayes, Michele Turre, Mac McCoy, Aimee Anderson, Katherine Waddell

Meeting called to order and began at 6:05

1. Approved Nov. 16, 2023 minutes

2. Bigelow Meadow - Sign; Mowing, Bird Boxes

Aimee summarized January 6th site visit to assess recent mowing and clean-up by Roaring Brook Excavation (Nick Potter). Owen Wormser, who is advising the OSC on management of the meadow, reviewed the specialized mowing equipment that was used, the additional hand-cutting that was done, and the plan going forward. The cost of mowing and hand-cutting was \$1,900; it consumed 2 days' work with mostly 2 people.

Chris Serra and Jess Travis, neighbors at the top of the meadow, attended and were enthusiastic about the project. They'll erect the kestrel box when ground conditions permit. Also attending were pollinator enthusiasts John Cordes and Hannah Harvester; and Tony Somers of the Conservation Commission. Although invited, abutters at the bottom of the hill did not come.

A *Bigelow Meadow Maintenance Plan* document (attached) prepared by Owen was reviewed by OSC members and endorsed. The document is to these minutes.

A sign to mark the meadow was discussed. Michele offered to try a draft design, with similarities to South River Meadow sign. It was agreed two wooden posts would be sufficient.

3. Criteria for Open Space Preservation

OSC needs to determine priorities for preserving open space because:

- We're charged with it in the bylaw establishing the OSC.
- It's a goal of the recently completed Open Space & Recreation Plan.
- It's included in the town policy on reviewing properties coming out of Chp. 61 preferential tax treatment. (The town has first refusal to purchase any parcel of land under Chp. 61.)

Janet had distributed a draft of priorities for the OSC reference in reviewing any properties that the Open Space would use to determine if that land was appropriate for the town to acquire for preservation purposes. The Select Board is required to notify the Open Committee of any such properties.

Committee members agreed to review the draft and take it up at a later meeting.

4. Kestrel Project

Janet noted that announcement of the proposed kestrel project was on the cover of this month's Town Currents issue, and she has already been contacted by a number of folks. She is maintaining a list of interested property owners and volunteers.

Tom Ricardi has 2-3 kestrel boxes in the Poland Wildlife Mgt area, and asked that we also care for them.

The committee discussed providing funding for materials that may be needed to be purchased (lumber, special ladder). An initial budget of \$500 was proposed and approved by the committee.

A neighbor of Janet's will spec the materials needed to make the boxes during February. Nelson Shifflett has volunteered to provide locust posts by mid to near end March. Site visit may also happen in March and installations could begin.

5. Updates/Continuing Issues

Wildlife Slam - March 24

- First announcement was on the cover of the recent February Currents
- The announcement will be run again in the March Currents
- The flyer was re-circulated by email to Committee members to circulate.
- Mac will post it at the Sportsman's Club & ask Ken Ouimette to circulate to membership.
- Aimee posted around town and will forward to the Grammar School.
- Janet suggested planning for refreshments at the next meeting (Feb. 21).
- Also asking the Franklin Community Cable TV to record the event.

Open Space Preservation - Neighborhood Network Mini grant

- Grant of about \$3,000 from Mass Woods was approved for neighborhood outreach.
- Brittany Nickerson, member of Conservation Commission, is spearheading.

South River Geomorphological Town Talk

- Mac noted the well-attended and well-presented public talk sponsored by FRCOG and given by Nic Miller last Sunday. The focus was on the geomorphological history and state of the South River and valley stream network. He reviewed a range of small and larger projects that can be and may be done in future. The event was videotaped.

Next Meeting Scheduled for Wednesday, Feb. 21, at 6pm in Town Hall and/or by Zoom

Meeting Adjourned at 7:15pm