

Weston Conservation Commission (WCC) - Public Meeting Minutes

April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2023

Approved: April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2022

Members Participating: Joe Berman (Chair), Rees Tullos, Glenn Butcher, Alison Barlow, Ellen Freeman Roth

Members Absent: Josh Feinblum,

Conservation Staff: Joshua Baker

Notes: Pursuant to An Act Relative to Extending Certain State of Emergency Accommodations, signed by Governor Baker on July 16<sup>th</sup>, 2022 and extended again by Governor Healy on March 29<sup>th</sup>, 2023, which extends the expiration of the remote meeting provisions pertaining to the Open Meeting Law to March 31, 2025, public bodies may continue holding meetings remotely without a quorum of the public body physically present at a meeting location, and to provide "adequate, alternative" access to remote meetings. As such, no in-person attendance of members of the public is available but every effort will be made to ensure that the public can adequately access the proceedings in real time including a dial-in option.

Joe Berman, Chair, opened the meeting at 7:30 PM with an opportunity for public comment.

Hearing none, the following hearings and meetings were taken up in order:

Eagle Scout Proposal: Preservation of historic site at Sears Land

Ciaran Gavin, Eagle Scout Candidate, presented his Eagle Scout capstone project proposal, which involves the preservation of an old mill site used to produce desks and chairs between the 18<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries at the Sears Land Conservation Area. Work at the site will include brush clearing of invasive species and debris removal as well as the installation of a historic marker, which has already been drafted by the Historic Society.

All work will be done by hand, using mechanical tools, with the exception of possible chainsaw usage. No chemical applications are being proposed or approved and at least two Boy Scouts of America (BSA) approved adults will be present during the time of the project to ensure the project scope does not exceed its proposed limits.

A motion to approve Ciaran Gavin's Eagle Scout project by authorizing the Conservation Administrator to administratively approve the project, with the condition that no chemical products will be applied, was made by Alison Barlow; seconded by Ellen Freeman Roth. Roll call vote 5-0.

Land Use Permit Request: Vernal pool biodiversity study

Katja Kwaku, PhD candidate in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, University of Connecticut, presented a proposal to conduct vernal species sampling in Weston as part of an urban-rural vernal pool biodiversity study.

The study involves collecting samples of both wood frogs and spring peeper eggs in rural and urban vernal pools and then transporting the rural populations to urban pools to be reared in urban conditions. The expected results of the project will showcase whether wood frog fitness drops in urban pools versus rural pools and as such will reveal if lower wood frog populations in urban settings is due to poor adaptability (supported by high mortality of rural populations in urban settings) or poor connectivity between rural and urban pools (supported by equivalent mortality between rural populations in urban settings and urban populations in urban settings). The results would implicate whether wood frogs require stricter conservation

measures to protect the urban populations or if ecological corridors need to be better maintained to allow rural and urban populations to intermix to improve urban numbers.

In order to perform their study, Ms. Kwaku has proposed to take no more than 10% of egg mass from the study pools and in cases of humane euthanizing to study the morphology of the specimens, no more than 10 individuals per pond would be picked.

A state issued researcher's license which allows the lawful collection of the specimens in question has been obtained.

A motion to approve Katja Kwaku's research proposal by authorizing the Conservation Administrator to administratively approve the project, including the humane removal and study of local wood frogs and spring peepers was made by Glenn Butcher; seconded by Rees Tullos. Roll call vote 5-0.

Notice of Intent: 27 Golden Ball Road, DEP #337-1465; A. Leblanc

The applicant has requested to continue their hearing via email to April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2023 at 8:30 pm.

A motion was made to continue the Notice of Intent hearing for 27 Golden Ball Road, DEP 337-1465, at the request of the applicant, to April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2023 at 8:30 pm by Rees Tulloss; seconded by Glenn Butcher. Roll call vote 5-0.

**The following Administration Matters were discussed throughout the meeting:**

Approval of 3/28/2023 Conservation Commission meeting minutes:

A motion was made to approve the minutes of the 3/28/2023 Conservation Commission meeting by Ellen Freeman Roth; seconded by Glenn Butcher. Roll call vote 5-0.

Request for Certificate of Compliance: 29 Deer Path Lane; 337-1401:

A motion was made to issue a Certificate of Compliance for 29 Deer Path Lane, DEP# 337-1401, by Ellen Freeman Roth; seconded by Glenn Butcher. Roll call vote 5-0.

Approval of New Trail Construction; DEP# 337-1016:

A motion to approve the construction of a new trail on Conservation Land between Orchard Avenue and Ridgeway Road in compliance with the Trail Maintenance and Invasive Species Management OOC, Section II(2), DEP 337-1016, was made by Glenn Butcher; seconded by Rees Tulloss. Roll call vote 5-0.

Joshua Baker, Conservation Assistant, provided the following Land Management Updates

- On Saturday, 4/15, the Stewardship Saturday event to construct a new trail off of Orchard Avenue is to commence. This will replace the current trail, which is considerably eroded and steep.
- Update: Wetlands Protection Bylaw
  - The next presentations are to SWAG, via zoom, at 9:15 a.m. on 4/13 and to the public, in-person, at Town Hall at 7:00 p.m. on 4/13
  - Alison Barlow volunteered to aid the Council on Aging's 4/13 pre-meeting forum and help lead any discussions surrounding the Wetland Bylaw

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm.