

MIDDLESEX CONSERVATION COMMISSION
Thursday, November 12, 2020
Meeting Conducted Remotely via Zoom

Minutes

Commissioners Present: Larry Becker, Ross Lieblappen, George Longenecker, Lee Rosberg, Dave Shepard and Jon Udis

Guests: Michael Hall, Dave Lawrence, Michael Levine, Sandy Levine

Meeting called to order at 7:02 p.m.

1. Administrative Operations

a. Minutes of October 1st Meeting

George moved to approve the minutes of the October 1st meeting of the Middlesex Conservation Commission (MCC) with a second from Jon. The minutes were approved.

b. Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Heather Katz provided the fund balances by email prior to the meeting:

- Conservation Fund = \$9,036.15
- Special Projects Fund = \$998.55
- Annual Operating Budget = 500.00

c. Correspondence

Select Board member Liz Scharf contacted the MCC to inquire whether the conservation project involving Sarah Seidman and Scott Harrower and the Vermont Land Trust (VLT) had fallen through or if VLT had only withdrawn their request for a contribution from the Middlesex Conservation Fund. Lee responded to her that the original potential buyer had backed out and VLT was seeking another purchaser but the funding that had been lined up was still available.

2. Project Reports (point person shown in parentheses)

a. Neighborhood coalition attempting to purchase part of the Manosh property on South Bear Swamp Road (Lee)

The MCC was joined by several members of the neighborhood coalition for this topic. There are three parcels owned by Howard Manosh that are up for sale consisting of 64 acres (so called Hunger Mountain parcel), 77 acres (Green parcel), and 250 acres (Densmore parcel). The 64 acre parcel is under a sale contract, probably for a single family home, while the other two are still available. The neighborhood coalition is interested in purchasing as much of the remaining land as possible to keep it intact for public access with a conservation easement on part of the land. To that end, they made an offer of \$300,000 in October that was not accepted.

George asked whether the coalition had contacted the Trust for Public Land (TPL). Michael Hall replied they have contacted the VLT and are open to any organization who might be able to help.

Michael Levine noted that the TPL might be more likely to have the funding to move quickly on such a project. Lee said these parcels could be of interest to the TPL since it would build on their Hunger Mountain Headwaters project. The list price for all three parcels was \$970,000; the asking prices for the two remaining parcels should be between \$670,000 and \$750,000. Michael Hall thinks the old road that runs through part of this property is potentially still a public right of way. This road was the subject of a lawsuit between the town and a landowner over the public status of the road with the court deciding in favor of the landowner that at least a portion of it was not a public road.

Michael Levine suggested it could be helpful for the MCC to contact Mr. Manosh about the conservation value of the property. Sandy Levine said that some money could be offered as a means to preserve an option to buy the property for a stated period to provide time to line up funding for the purchase. Since a significant snowmobile trail may cross a portion of the land, the Vermont Association of Snow Travelers (VAST) may also have an interest. Lee will work on a draft of a letter to Mr. Manosh and check with Aaron Weed on whether VAST might have any interest in joining this effort. Contact should also be made with the TPL and Rupert and Jan Thouron.

b. Middlesex Trails Group update (Dave, George, and/or Jon)

Jon reported the Group is taking a break on working actively on the informal trail system near Rumney School as two of the four landowners over whose land the trails pass are not currently interested in hosting a public trail. The current focus is shifting toward an inventory of public rights of way and means to promote their use. Ross offered that he has traveled on foot all of the Class 4 roads and legal trails he could locate in town and he could pass along this information towards creating the inventory.

c. Middlesex Town Forest (Dave and Ross)

Dave reported there has been no change in trail work beyond the demonstration side hill construction that Seth Coffey performed. At this stage of the year, further side hill construction may need to wait until next spring.

Dell has purchased and installed a box on the trailhead kiosk to contain a trail register. Lee will get a logbook to put in the box.

Sarah Birgé has volunteered to make trail signs and provided Ross with several options to present for review to the MCC. The MCC preference was for white letters painted on a natural wood background.

Lee asked about potential tool purchases for trail maintenance. Dave suggested at some point it could be useful to purchase a pack specifically designed for carrying a chainsaw and Lee proposed a long bladed pruning type handsaw.

The Town highway department has marked out with boulders an overflow parking area at the town gravel pit on Notch Road. Once confirmed it is ready for use, the MCC can install a sign to

inform users.

There has been no progress on updating the management plan. Scott Beaudin provided a recommendation of a consulting forester if the town decides to hire one to draft a timber management plan.

3. Other business

Lee said the MCC will need to submit its operating budget request soon to the Select Board. Typically the request is for \$500 divided into several broad categories. Lee said he would send the Select Board a proposed budget for their next meeting based on the MCC's previous budget request. Dave asked whether the MCC wants to include a request for an appropriation for the Conservation Fund in the budget request. Lee said an appropriation for the Conservation Fund doesn't have to be finalized as soon as the operating budget so it can be discussed further at the next meeting. Given the challenging economy, brought about in part by the COVID-19 pandemic, Lee's suggestion was to reduce our usual request by half and encourage personal donations, from those who can afford it, to support the many valuable charitable requests that come before the town at Town Meeting, including the Conservation Fund.

Meeting adjourned at 8:47 p.m.

Minutes recorded by Dave Shepard, MCC Secretary