

MIDDLESEX CONSERVATION COMMISSION
Thursday, June 4, 2020
Meeting Conducted Remotely via Zoom

Minutes

Commissioners Present: Sorsha Anderson, Larry Becker, Heather Katz, Ross Lieblappen, George Longenecker, Dell McDonough, Lee Rosberg, Dave Shepard, Jon Udis
Guest: Steve Juiffre

1. Administrative Operations

a. Minutes of May 7th Meeting

Sorsha made a motion to approve the May 7, 2020 meeting minutes with a second from George. The minutes were approved.

b. Treasurer's Report

Heather reported the current fund balances as follows:

- Conservation Fund: \$9035.44
- Special Projects Fund: \$1115.96
- Operating Budget: \$455.94

The Special Projects Fund balance has been corrected from the total presented during the May 7th meeting.

c. Correspondence

Lee received an email from East Bear Swamp Road resident Meghan Poperowitz, which was also sent to the Select Board, about the beaver flooding of a portion of North Bear Swamp Road that she likes to use for recreation. She would like to see the beaver habitat maintained while also keeping the road open for pedestrian use and to see the road closed to vehicular traffic except for emergency vehicles. Lee reported that Paul Cerminara will be following up with the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department (FWD) on addressing the beaver flooding and has offered the MCC's assistance, if needed. Jon reported a site visit with Paul Cerminara and FWD is scheduled for the following week.

d. Election of Officers

Election of officers for the upcoming year is summarized as follows:

- Chair: Ross nominated Lee with a second from Heather. Lee stated he would like to see someone else move into the chair position in the next year or two. Heather encouraged MCC members to continue to take leadership roles on different projects so that the position of Chair is less daunting. Lee was elected Chair.
- Vice Chair: Dave nominated George with a second from Sorsha. George was elected Vice Chair.
- Treasurer: Lee nominated Heather with a second from Dave. Heather was elected

Treasurer.

- Secretary: George nominated Dave with a second from Ross. Dave was elected Secretary.

Heather inquired whether any Commissioner terms were coming due this year. Lee said the terms for Heather and Dave expire in 2020; George, Ross and Sorsha in 2021; Lee and Dell in 2022; and Larry and Jon in 2023. Lee made a motion to reappoint Heather and Dave to new terms with a second from Ross. The motion passed.

2. Project Reports (point person shown in parentheses)

a. Trail Subcommittee (George, Jon and Dave)

Jon said a Zoom meeting of the subcommittee is scheduled for next Monday with items to be discussed including the trails near Rumney School and the results of the trail survey. Lee reported that Rupert Thuron, with the Town's approval, has improved the Class 4 road from his driveway to the trailhead parking area at the Putnam State Forest.

b. Middlesex Outstanding Conservationist Award

In keeping with the June meeting being the time that the Middlesex Outstanding Conservationist Award is given out, Lee nominated Wendy Knapp for her many years of educating residents about the annual spring salamander migration, putting up salamander crossing signs and helping the salamanders across the road during the nights of their migration. Ross seconded the nomination and all enthusiastically approved. The award will include a framed certificate and gift certificate to Red Hen. Ross will coordinate with Lee on having a copy made of the certificate.

c. Wrightsville Trail (George)

No update to report. On a related matter, George noted the lack of any toilet facilities at the Wrightsville boat launch and made a motion to forward this issue to the attention of the Select Board and Town Health Officer as a health concern. Lee provided a second to the motion and the motion was approved. The question was raised as to whether the Wrightsville Beach Recreation District has authority over the boat launch.

d. Emerald Ash Borer (Sorsha)

Sorsha has had technical problems with the mapping app. Ross said he could assist with the technical issues. Sorsha and Ross will coordinate on a training for interested volunteers, likely by Zoom.

e. Green Up Day (Sorsha)

Sorsha reported there is an issue with the cost of disposal for the tires collected during Green Up. A donor has offered to pay half the cost for the disposal. There are at least 50 tires. Sorsha asked if the MCC could pay the other half of the cost. George made a motion to spend up to \$150 from the MCC operating budget toward the tire disposal fee. Lee seconded the motion. Discussion ensued of the likely total cost of disposal with an assumed cost of \$4 or \$5 per tire. An amendment was offered to remove the monetary limit and authorize paying for half the total disposal cost and the amended motion passed. The income from the metal recycling bin that is

provided by Bolduc Metal Recycling is donated to help cover the trash disposal cost from Green Up. Heather raised the concept of a pre-paid tire disposal fee when a tire is purchased to incentivize proper disposal of tires. She will look into what the annual Wheels for Warmth event does with the tires they receive that aren't usable and inquire with our legislative contingent about the fee concept.

f. Middlesex Town Forest (Dave and Ross)

Dave and Ross gave a Middlesex Town Forest (MTF) trail maintenance update. Dave will contact Seth about potentially having a tutorial for a few individuals on proper sidehill benching to allow volunteers to work on that aspect of the Chases Mountain Trail. The official opening of the trail will be on hold for now due to COVID-19 and parking concerns.

The kiosk display is ready to be printed. Lee will be picking up the paint for the plywood panel to be installed on the kiosk that the display will then be mounted on. The cost for the paint and printing will come from the Tiny Grant received last year from the Association of Vermont Conservation Commissions. The box to house the log book for the trail is on Lee's to do list. Lee plans to reach out again to those who expressed interest in making trail signs.

There was an onsite meeting on May 20th with Select Board Chair Peter Hood, Tim Appleton with the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department (FWD) and Road Commissioner Steve Martin to look at options for parking for the Middlesex Notch Wildlife Management Area and the MTF. There is some interest in upgrading the current Class 4 road past Bryan Redmond's driveway to allow for parallel parking. Lee expressed some concern over stormwater runoff. FWD may be able to help pay for some signage alerting users of these properties of vehicular traffic on the road beyond the current parking area, to keep dogs on a leash and to walk to the side of the road. Lee wants to get temporary signs up this coming weekend and do a posting on Front Porch Forum. Bryan had reported considerable pedestrian traffic over Memorial Day weekend although Steve Juiffre did not feel the level of use was unusual. Bryan had also inquired about potentially closing the MTF until the parking issue has been resolved. Lee told Bryan the MCC hadn't had discussions on restricting access or whether that could even be done. He also reported on progress that has been made so far on evaluating parking improvements, including the potential for expanding parking at the current location. As road dust from perceived increased traffic from MTF users has been expressed as a concern by some Notch Road residents, Sorsha suggested reducing the speed limit. George suggested checking with the Select Board about the requirements for changing a speed limit. Steve thought Notch Road residents would appreciate a lower speed limit. Sorsha will follow up.

Lee said a copy of the MTF Management Plan, with track changes, has been circulated for comments. Dave gave an update on the status of assistance from the County Forester for reviewing the potential for harvesting timber on the MTF in conjunction with Scott Beaudin's timber harvest planned for the winter of 2020-2021. The Washington County Forester, Dan Singleton, has taken a new job with the Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation but he will

check with neighboring County Foresters to see if any of them could assist.

g. Shady Rill Picnic Area (Heather)

A contractor has been hired by the Winooski Natural Resources Conservation District to manage the riparian restoration project. The contractor will likely be putting out a request for proposals for the site work. The proposal has been pared back somewhat from the original regarding plantings and educational signs. Dave suggested the MCC could potentially assist with tree/shrub purchasing and planting.

h. 3 Mile Bridge Road Parcel (Larry)

Larry reported June 9th is the date scheduled by the Cross Vermont Trail Association for site work including mowing and potentially installing the informational sign.

i. Seidman/Harrower Property

Lee mentioned the MCC may need to advocate for incorporating public access into this project with the Vermont Land Trust.

3. Other Business

Dave mentioned the concept of promoting individual donations from those who can afford to do so to help reduce the usual funding request from the voters for the Conservation Fund in light of the economic impact on many people from COVID-19. Jon suggested including other organizations that will also be in need of funding in any promotion.

In keeping with past practice, and the bylaws, there will be no July meeting unless something crucial comes up.

Minutes recorded by Dave Shepard, MCC Secretary