

Open Space Committee Meeting Minutes

November 29, 2023 in the Slade Building Conference Room

Attending members: Bob Hatch, Stephanie Frend, Mark Kresge, Todd Livdahl, Tim Hawley, Susan Worth, Rick Jones. Not present: David Marsh

Guests: Nate Boudreau, Town Administrator; Mike Stoll, resident

Call to order – 7:08 p.m.

- The minutes from our October 25, 2023 meeting were unanimously approved as edited.
- **Treasurer's Report** – Susan reported the Ryder Property and Open Space Expense accounts had no changes from the previous month, but the Hubbardston Preservation Trust account increased by \$1,776.50. She expects this is hay money from Laine but has not yet received confirmation of this from the town accountant.
 - **Ryder Property** Acct. 2615 – **\$4,125.32**
 - **Hubbardston Preservation Trust** Acct. 8508 – **\$14,833.40**
 - **Open Space Expense (donations)** acct. 2612 – **\$348.34**

Unfinished (Old) Business:

- **Hubbardston Hikers** – Tim will be leading an educational hike on December 9th heading south from Williamsville Road on a section of the rail trail. His subject will be hemlock trees. He has publicized the hike in the Barre Gazette, town website, and town social media site. The hike will be approximately a mile, rain or shine.
- **Land Conservation priority team** – There were no meetings the past month by this team.
- **Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) status** – The draft goals that are required for Section 8 of the OSRP that Rick and Tim have distributed were reviewed and the format that Tim created with three top-level goal categories that each combine a subset of similar goals was presented and discussed. Tim will consolidate the input from the discussion as well as further thoughts submitted by email to update the draft. He will provide that revision to the committee prior to the next meeting. The next step is to provide further specificity to form the basis for the Action Plan that is required for Section 9 of the plan.
- **Canesto Brook flooding** – Repair of the plugged beaver deceiver creating the flooding is delayed until Spring.
- **ARPA funds** – Mark is proposing that we use the approximately \$16,000 we were awarded to leverage Massachusetts Trails Grants for two projects. The Mass Trails Grant is evaluated on two separate tracks – one that is federally funded and one that is state funded. Applying for one does not affect possibility for approval of the other.
 - **Project 1** – Install flashing yellow lights on the Ware River Rail Trail crossing at Williamsville Road to alert traffic approaching the blind curve there from either direction to the presence of trail users who are nearing the crossing, hopefully getting drivers to slow down. The alert would be triggered by motion sensors facing both directions on the rail trail. Mark noted that an identical project was approved by DCR last year and that it 'checked all the boxes' on what they typically look for on Mass Trails projects: safety, improvements to the Ware River Rail Trail.

Mark is estimating that the project would require \$15,000 for the equipment and \$10,000-\$15,000 for installation, which would have to meet prevailing wage requirements. To meet the DCR's 4-to-1 match preference he suggests using \$6,000-\$7,000 of the ARPA funds and solicit the remaining funding from other users of the rail trail such as the New England Mountain Bike Association, snowmobile groups, Bay State Trail Riders, and Barre Riding and Driving Club.

- Project 2 – Creation of a universal access (all persons) trail at the Malone Road Conservation Area for people with mobility challenges. Tim and Mark have scouted a potential route for altering the current Dottie Rock Trail up to the Dottie Rock vista and, since the elevation of the parking lot and Dottie Rock are identical, have determined a route which would eliminate the steep grades of the current trail. Mark has communicated with North County Land Trust which holds the Conservation Restriction on the area to get their input on the feasibility and their approval; and possibly acting as the contracting agency to avoid the prevailing wage requirements.

Another potential amenity to the project Mark has explored is the creation of an overlook deck at the Dottie Rock vista that would be accessible by wheelchairs. He suggested that if we were able to include the cost of the materials for it in the grant application, the Lion's Club might be willing to build it. He also briefed DCR on the project and their preliminary feedback was positive; however, this second project is not a 'slam-dunk'. The remaining \$9,000-\$10,000 of the ARPA funds would be used to leverage this second grant request.

New Business:

- **New Monthly meeting date change** – The committee agreed to change our regular monthly day from the last Wednesday to the last Thursday of each month.
- **Metal detection on Conservation land** – Bob received an inquiry from someone about permission requirements for metal detection on town conservation land. Bob noted that DCR forbids it on state land, but town bylaws are silent on the issue for town land. Tim moved that we approach the Conservation Commission to suggest amending the Land Management plan to forbid metal detection on town property. A question was raised on how such a bylaw would be enforced. Nate offered to ask his counterparts in other towns if they had policies on metal detection and digging on town land. Tim withdrew his motion, suggesting that more information be gathered before moving forward on this.
- **Trail Map inventory** – The supply of printed trail maps at Mt. Jefferson and Malone is dwindling and Susan asked whether we wanted to reprint the existing maps. There was general agreement that we should do this and possibly approach town businesses to contribute to the cost if we put an advertisement of their business on it. Rick will contact Jassy Bratko to determine if the original artwork still exists and check into the costs for a reprint.
- **East Quabbin Land Trust update** – Mike Stoll updated the committee on work that's been done the past month on the two EQLT Conservation areas – the 150 acre Hidden Meadow and the 94 acre Henry's Grove areas on Lombard Road. At Hidden Meadow, 1-1/2 miles of mountain bike trail was cleared and a short gravel access road and parking area was created off Lombard Road. Mike and Rick also scouted the planned route for another loop trail planned for Hidden Meadow and discussed a potential project for creating nature education elements on it, possibly as a Boy Scout or Girl Scout project. At Henry's Grove, Wood Duck and Barred Owl boxes were put up.

The next meeting is planned for January 4th following the holidays at the Slade Building Conference Room at 7:00 pm.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:39 pm.

Respectfully,

~Rick Jones