

Town of Waitsfield Conservation Commission
DRAFT Meeting Minutes
October 16, 2023
6:30 PM Waitsfield Town offices and Via Zoom

Members Present: Curt Linberg, Phil Huffman, Ted Joslin, James Donaldson, Leo Laferriere, Gail O'Keefe, Bruno Grimaldi, Chris Loomis, Bob Cook

Meeting called to order by Curt

- 1) No changes to agenda
- 2) No questions, requests or comments from public
- 3) Sept 18th minutes approved, without discussion, one abstention (Phil)
- 4) Scrag Trail update and stewardship plan- James
Drainage working well. Curt added stepping stones. Muck has dried out. New segments look good. James urged opening trail asap, since many people have been waiting for the project. James will blow off leaves after the rains to make trail more visible, clear out water bars, etc. Announcement put out next week in Valley Reporter, with usual trail precautions. Question posed whether the leaves should be left on trail for a buffer against erosion and soil damage, but Chris and James urged removing. Future work needed to determine what to do with old trails, before a trail map is made. New trail markers, with logo will be ordered and put up. Soft opening in November, formal opening in spring along with announcement of Phase 2. Must get next segment flagged in order to proceed with Phase 2. Phil reiterated the need for a celebration, also urged looking into non-plastic tags. Bruno wants to keep in mind that for second phase, donations were made for trails around the beaver pond. James pointed out that permitting will be problematic in such an environmentally sensitive area. Phil remarked we're still hemmed in by the town footprint and ecological constraints of getting to the top of the property. James proposed setting up a few volunteer work days for trail maintenance, modeled after the invasive species. A plan and dates will be proposed by James. Gratitude expressed for the considerable work James put into the project.
- 5) Invasive species/ Habitat restoration grant Curt. This grant will allow more riparian planting, more work on other invasive species. Ecological Planning Laboratory may be available for scientific support if we get the grant. We'll know in December.
- 6) Farley Riverside Park - Phil reports Brian Shupe has been looking for landscape architect, including a plan for stone bench, ConCom will have a chance to weigh in. Ted asked if there was a consideration of the stone type, granite? Leo has a good contact for

granite stoneworker. Work is now in Brian, Annie's and Randy's court to draft an RFP. Likely work would be over \$5k threshold, so will require RFP. Phil reminded group that thought needs to be given to the overall project, to review the initial draft Leo did in the spring of the sketch and management actions for property. Chris suggested use of maps from VLT, use same cartographer for ease, though a new person in VLT (no longer Liza Walker) who handles mapping. Should have an introductory meeting with Mead Binhammer, new point person for our area. Leo, concerned that this project should move forward before Virginia Farley fades in memory. Next steps - all review memo before next meeting, Leo recalled a bench from native stone bracketed with lupines, placed for upstream view. There were other ideas for different zones, Chris might remember.

7) Planting plans- Curt met with Ira Shadis about planting on Nov 4, 9-12 or rain/snow date Sunday Nov 5. Friends of Mad River will have volunteers.

8) Financial Report- Bruno

General : \$500 to Mad River Bear Assoc., Intervale invoice for plant material, left with \$1177.30 for rest of this year.

Invasive Species Reserve Fund, negative balance, Bruno must go through with Randy.
Farley Memorial Reserve Fund- balance of \$48,782.37 -

Question from Phil on timing of sugaring money from Dave Gavit - Scrag sugaring lease. Estimated \$5-6k /year. Bruno will give update next meeting.

9) Other business- next meeting will be Nov. 20th. Sam Robinson from Mad River Planning. Invite for December meeting - Robert Nelson -County Forester. He acts as consulting forester on our lands. Managed timber sale on Scrag and provided management on Scrag and Wu Ledges. Good resource.

Phil reported that the Steering Committee for the Valleywide Conservation and Recreation Committee will be hosting a Community Learning meeting with two speakers, ecological and recreational, about big picture trends on biodiversity and recreation. Hope to have it before Thanksgiving. Details to follow, will be widely announced. The committee aims to provide a gold standard for integrating recreation with environmental resources specific to the Valley.

MOTION to go into executive session by Gail, seconded by Bruno for consideration of some real estate issues.

Public meeting resumed 9:07

MOTION by James to authorize the chair and vice chair to communicate with the selectboard and town administrator regarding a proposed next step in an ongoing contract matter. Second by Phil. Passed with one abstention (Bob).

Motion to adjourn, Bruno

Respectfully submitted

Gail O'Keefe