

# ***TOWN OF WAITSFIELD***

## **CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES**

**Monday, November 21st, 2022; 6:30 p.m.**

### MINUTES

Members Present: Phil Huffman, Bob Cook, Curt Lindberg, James Donaldson, Chris Loomis, Ted Joslin, PJ Telep, Leo Laferriere

Members Absent: Bruno Grimaldi

Public in attendance:

Lindberg opens the meeting at 6:35 PM

Review and Approve Minutes – Minutes of October 17th, 2022 meeting. Add Leo's name as he attended the October 17th, 2022 meeting. MOTION by Joslin.

Phil wants to edit the third sentence for accuracy of the Tardy section to budget \$30,000-35,000 plus \$25,000 for a long term stewardship for a total budget of \$60,000.

MOTION APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY

Budget Request to the Select Board (on the agenda on November 28th.) Recap of last year's budget request that was approved increased from \$2500 to \$5000 for operating funds. Increase in the reserve fund from \$10000 to \$20000. And establish an invasive species reserve fund of \$10000.

Bruno and Curt looked at the anticipated expenditures for this year and recognized that the town budget is likely to be tighter in the coming year. Their recommendation is to request that same level of funding in the coming year. With one addition to be allowed to access unused funds in the invasive species funds the following year.

Phil is supportive. MOTION by Huffman. Cook SECONDED. Leo comment - may need some money for legal expenses. Per Ted, as far as legal goes, depends upon who is in the tangle and the town may have to pay for it. Loomis - skeptical that it would be the Commission versus the Select Board that would incur the legal fees. To be discussed in executive session.

Bob comment - will the \$10000 of the invasive funds have to be put before the voters again?

Curt - not sure.

MOTION APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY

Knotweed Management Report: Curt - plan to share with the Select Board next week. Curt welcomes reflections and recommendations from the Commission. Donaldson thanks Cook and Lindberg for their efforts. Loomis - thanks and make sure Cook and Lindberg include the number of hours they spent leading the effort. Ted - thanks for the efforts. Curt didn't account for his and Bob's planning time. Primarily it was labor time working on the sites. Cook - probably need to discuss the use of chemicals at some point regarding knotweed management. Phil was skeptical about how much of an impact the knotweed effort would have made, but has been convinced! And appreciated the work in the headwaters area to nip it in the bud earlier before spreading downstream. Telep asked about the role of the town beyond clearing existing infestations notably about sourcing clean materials. Bob has developed a good relationship with the new town road foreman. Curt - need to determine knotweed disposal area and to understand where future road projects are so that sites can be inspected before work happens to mitigate the spread of knotweed.

UVM Field Naturalist Proposal - Curt gave an overview of the proposal. Curt was impressed with the program when he learned about it a few years ago. Curt feels the Field Naturalist Program would be great resource for the MRV effort and to use the Tardy parcel as a pilot. Curt spoke with Jito at the Warren Conservation Commission and the Fayston Conservation Commission. FCC would like to join in the knotweed effort and committed the funds for it on the spot.

Curt submitted the proposal on the due date of November 15th.

Bob - there have been tri-town conservation efforts over the years with not a lot of action, Bob is wondering if the addition of Fayston might make it more difficult and complex managing a three town effort.. Phil - looks like a great idea; the caliber of the students of the program is very high. Gives us the benefit of the student's advisors who are knowledgeable in many areas. Phil welcomes the addition of Fayston.

Ted - please clarify what parcels and timeframe is the proposal and the money involved by the 3 towns (Warren, Waitsfield, Fayston). Per Curt, project start would be early next year and run 14 months. Draft reports by the end of next year and final reports in the Spring of 2024. The cost is \$6000 per project and potential funding for travel up to \$1000. The geographic area is the entire three towns. Costs would be split three ways.

Valley-wide Recreation Visioning Project - Phil submitted a proposal on behalf of the Steering Committee of the Valley-wide Visioning Project to the town's ARPA process for a \$5000 grant towards the project to match what Fayston has done for \$5000.

Virginia Farley Memorial At Tardy property update: Huffman provided an update. Thinking hasn't really changed from the May 16th 2022 meeting regarding the direction. It has been largely consistent with what Leo and others have been thinking about giving a neglected public land site attention. This is an opportunity to move relatively quickly to make improvements to the parcel. The thought is to do a low key, low impact, tasteful and inviting site to improve the quality of the property. And enhance public access to the parcel (modest parking area in the right location woven in with the other elements). Having the assistance of a landscape architect lay it out would be beneficial with guidance from the WCC. Linking this effort to lack of a management plan, if need be, the WCC can figure out how to dovetail the process going on for the memorial with developing a management plan for the Tardy parcel. Memorial project is in alignment with the easement that the Vermont Land Trust holds. Phil noted that the total budget for the effort stands at \$60000, with \$25000 of this total for long-term stewardship.

Bob - how do we feel how the knotweed management activities overlap with the plans for the Tardy parcel. Phil - great way to accelerate it and also a great opportunity with the Field Naturalist program proposal.

Curt - Inquires where he can find the easement on the Tardy parcel. Not sure there is an electronic copy. It is a short easement. Loomis - an email to Chris Moore at the VLT could get a copy of the easement to the WCC.

Loomis - how much is left of the small parcel (4 to 7 acres?) after memorial improvements are made? Phil - obvious flat spot for small parking area. Footpath from there to a bench spot and a short walking interpretive trail. A fair amount of the property notably to the southwest would be left for invasives control and native vegetation restoration.

Next steps on the funding part - charitable donations through December 14th. VLT is looking to hand off the funding (\$22,000) to the town by the end of this calendar year. To do that, VLT has proposed a MOU between VLT and the town - an operational document for how the funding can be used to improve the ecological condition of the parcel and maintenance. It would lead to the creation of a reserve fund for the property. MOTION by Curt to support authorizing Phil to work with Brian Shupe the town administrator and the select board to finalize a MOU between VLT and the town for the transfer of privately raised funds for the Farley Memorial Park. Telep  
SECONDED.

Leo wonders if the WCC should be involved here? Phil sees that WCC is involved given WCC is charged with the stewardship of town lands. Loomis - who will manage the funds - WCC, Select Board, other entities? Phil envisions the WCC would be lead on managing the funds and ultimately the Select Board. Leo still concerned.

All in favor save for Leo who OPPOSED. MOTION PASSES.

Phil, Ted, Leo, and Chris will convene a group to work on a management plan for the Tardy parcel.

Executive Session - MOTION to go to executive session by Loomis. Leo SECONDED.

MOTION to come out of executive session by Donaldson. Seconded by Leo. MOTION APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY

Commission comes out of executive session with no action taken.

Other business:

- Next meeting is December 19th and January 16th.
- Leo - need to start thinking about a management plan for Tardy parcel. Leo is a bit uneasy proceeding with the memorial plans without a management plan.
- Update on RFP on Scrag Trails.
- Review VLT easement on Tardy plan.

MOTION to adjourn by Phil, SECONDED by Ted. MOTION APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY