

## Wentworth Conservation Commission (WCC)

### Minutes of Regular Monthly Meeting

August 2, 2023

**Place:** Wentworth Congregational Church

**Time:** 6:00 PM

**Present:** Linda Brownson, Chair

Tuula Pihlajavesi, Vice Chair

Ilse "Izzy" Mercier, Secretary

Arnold Scheller, Select Board Ex-Officio

Visitors: Jordon King, Leslie Backstrom, Diane Cheney, Sharon Sanborn, Rick Ducheneau, Sonia Scheller, Nancy Strapko, Francis Muzzey, Mae and Richard Borger Sr, Ricky Borger Jr, Brian DuBois, John Comeau, Nancy Shedrick, Susan Judd, Omer Ahern Jr, Jayne and Jerry Bixby, Kim and Phil Chandonnet, Dawn Gove, Judy Gove, Amy Collette, Angela, Neil, Ryan and Nathan Borger, Lisa and David Burghardt, Wescott Smith, Joyce Palmer, George DeWolf, Janice Mulherin, Randi Melanson-Ball, Marni and Peter Kozak and Linda Franz

- Chair L. Brownson called the meeting to order at 6:04. Attendance sheet was passed. L. Brownson explained a sheet would be passed to sign up for a 2 minute slot to speak regarding the recreational trail.
- Minutes of 7/12/2023 approved by I. Mercier, seconded by T. Pihlajavesi.
- I. Mercier reported that the E. coli sampling for July was completed 7/13/23. Safe result indicator is 88. The results were Warren/Wentworth Bridge 12, Paige's 26 and Silver Bridge/Saunders Hill was 25. Warren numbers were an acceptable range but Rumney's numbers were highly elevated for July. Due to the amount of rain the area has received, the river is high and the current is fast so caution should be used when entering the water.
- **Motion regarding Town Forester:** T. Pihlajavesi moved that WCC recommend to the Select Board that they appoint Jordan King as Town Forester. I. Mercier seconded the motion and all WCC members agreed.
- Recreational Trail: Arnie Scheller, Selectman opened the discussion with a summary of the last Selectboard meeting where residents raised concerns about the impact the trail could have on the Town Forest and neighboring abutters.

Concerns were acknowledged, proposed concessions were discussed in response to some of those concerns; such as use by residents only, removing the interior secondary trail, flattening the top of the primary loop trail to distance the trail from the abutter's boundaries and hunting would continue in the Town Forest. This meeting provided an opportunity for further discussion of concerns and resolutions.

Jordan King explained that the last timber cut was 2018 and his estimate would be the next timber cut would be 18-20 years later. The Stewardship Plan he submitted at that time is available on the Town of Wentworth website.

**Motion regarding trail amendments:** I. Mercier moved that WCC amend the trail proposal to incorporate the following changes: Eliminate the 'north-south trail' and alter the primary loop trail to leave more space between the abutter to the north and the Town Forest. T. Pihlajavesi seconded the motion and all WCC members agreed.

Those that signed up to speak had their two minutes. Discussion consisted of numerous topics – the Town Master Plan results showed 73% of those submitting a survey wanted hiking trails, type of activities allowed, trail signage, volunteer engagement and liability, long term care of trails, educational opportunities with schools, no further growth of recreational trails, Plummer did not want to be memorialized so no naming of trails in recognition of his gift, clarification on who can use the trails, concern about applying for grants/easements that could dictate how the forest and trails are managed, operational control vs management control, animals permitted (pets on leashes, service animals, bear hunting dogs) and the importance of transparency on further WCC projects and that this proposal not start until approved by residents at the March 2024 town meeting.

It was noted that there are three openings on the Conservation Commission and was asked if there was any present that would like to fill those positions and there wasn't. It was suggested that attendees come to the next meeting with some of their thoughts in writing as a start towards putting together rules regarding trail usage and a draft of a warrant article to be proposed at the March 2024 town meeting.

**Motion regarding adopting Trail proposal:** L. Brownson moved that based on the decision of the Wentworth Conservation Commission, and authorized under the provision of RSA 31:112 as managers of the Town Forest, a motion to adopt the Recreational Trail Network and Management Plan Proposal for the Wentworth Town Forest. I. Mercier seconded and all WCC members agreed.

- No other business
- Meeting adjourned at 7:41 pm.  
Minutes submitted by I. Mercier 8/25/2023

**ADDENDUM: A WALK IN THE TOWN FOREST**

Date: August 19, 2023 3:30 – 5:30 pm

Present: Linda Brownson, Tuula Pihajavesi, Ilse Mercier, Jordan King, Brian DeBois, Rick Ducheneau, George Morrill, Wescott Smith, Kathy Keefe, Lisa Burghardt, Ricky Borger Jr, Neil, Angela, Ryan, Nathan and Ellie (dog) Borger

Purpose: Give residents a visual of the proposed trail and a better understanding of what the challenges will be for making this vision a reality.

It was a great day to be in the woods, bugs and ticks were minimal. Trail was estimated by GPS to be 1 ½ - 2 miles. It was nice having Jordan with us to explain past management of the forest, tree markings regarding boundaries, placement of trail in regards to using the skid trails and minimizing removal of slash left for erosion control.