



CITY OF MELROSE

CONSERVATION COMMISSION

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Melrose Conservation Commission Minutes for December 17, 2020

Present: Richard Doucette, Kate Hickey, Susan Murphy, Aaron Weieneth, Paul Moore and Ryan Sloan

Absent: Mike Paiewonsky

Staff present: Eric Devlin

Ms. Murphy opened the Remote public meeting at 7:30pm and read the Remote meeting statement below.

Pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18, and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitation on the number of people that may gather in one place, this meeting of the Melrose Conservation Commission will be conducted via remote participation to the greatest extent possible. Specific information and the general guidelines for remote participation by members of the public and/or parties with a right and/or requirement to attend this meeting can be found on the City of Melrose's website, at www.cityofmelrose.org. No in-person attendance of members of the public will be permitted, but every effort will be made to ensure that the public can adequately access the proceedings in real time, or in the event that we are unable to do so, we will post on the mmtv3.org website an audio or video recording, transcript, or other comprehensive record of proceedings as soon as possible after the meeting.

All Votes will be recorded via roll call votes.

Minutes-

Motion by Mr. Doucette to approve the minutes from November 19, 2020, as written. Mr. Weieneth seconded the motion.

Roll Call vote: Richard Doucette – yes, Kate Hickey – yes, Paul Moore – yes, Susan Murphy – yes, Ryan Sloan – yes, Aaron Weieneth – yes
6-0 in favor.

Invoices-

FY 2021 Solitude Lake Management year-end report - \$250.00

Motion by Mr. Doucette to approve payment of the invoice. Mr. Sloan seconded the

motion.

Roll Call vote: Richard Doucette – yes, Kate Hickey – yes, Paul Moore – yes, Susan Murphy – yes, Ryan Sloan – yes, Aaron Weieneth – yes
6-0 in favor.

Discussion:

Ell Pond Water Chestnut subcommittee - Recommendation that City create a task force for Ell Pond – Commission was originally going to create a subcommittee. The Mayor's office was going to implement a citywide task force to address issues in all City ponds and asked the Commission to hold off on subcommittee. Wintertime is when the Commission needs to actually formulate a plan and come up with a treatment budget for the spring/summer treatment season.

At a previous meeting it was discussed that the Commission was going to form a subcommittee to come up with a plan for the water chestnut at Ell Pond. The Mayor's office indicated a desire to create a City wide task force for all the ponds and have representatives from the relevant departments. No action from Mayor's office yet on creating the task force so the Commission is going to move forward with the subcommittee until the task force is created. Recommendation from the Commission for the Mayor's office to create the task force for all ponds in City to involve multiple departments. Parks department actually owns Ell pond, Commission is primarily the permitting body. Subcommittee meeting to be established for Thursday January 14, 2021 and a vote at that meeting on a resolution for the City to create the task force. Formal meeting with posting through City Clerk's office required.

Mr. Moore- Solitude report indicates high levels of Phosphorus that are not fully under control. Subcommittee to address this as well? Ms. Murphy- Subcommittee should include that in holistic plan for the ponds, DPW should be involved with the task force to address watershed inputs.

Grace Donohue- MHS student, Environmental Club interested in getting involved with the Water Chestnut removal in the Springtime. Invasive species mapping project planned for springtime as well. Would like to schedule a particular day in creating an early spring invasive species scavenger hunt. Possibly a day in late March?

Finn McSweeney- He was contacted to join City Task Force. No further development on it so far. Two focuses were Ell Pond and First Pond. Need to focus on drawing out volunteers for the Spring/Summer for the Water Chestnut removal.

Motion by Ms. Murphy to create a subcommittee for Ell Pond Water Chestnut. Commission to make a recommendation to the Mayor's office to create a task force that will include members of multiple departments and members of the public for all City ponds. Mr. Doucette seconded the motion.

Roll Call vote: Richard Doucette – yes, Kate Hickey – yes, Paul Moore – yes, Susan Murphy – yes, Ryan Sloan – yes, Aaron Weieneth – yes

6-0 in favor.

Melrose Trail Stewards – Trails discussion and thanks

Trail Steward for Flagg Acres Jose Mendez was present. City Councilor Thomas worked with him to get some trash cans put in the Flagg Acres parking area to help with trail debris cleanup. He has been working on area around Flagg Acres on areas he can get to with his children. Pandemic has likely changed level of trail usage. Would be willing to help clear trails if Commission had tools available for steward use. Fire pit areas, possibly formalize a program for permits to legally use those areas and possibly get permit holders to clean up those areas. Question on possible coordination with the Parks department or High School for programs out there?

Staff commented that Flagg Acres has has the highest level of interest/participation in the program. The Trail steward program appears to be making a substantial improvement to the area and gives the Commission better management information for its properties. He solicited feedback from the Commission and stewards on ways to improve the program, identify things that either work well or don't to make the program work better.

Commission consensus that debris items at the Chainsaw level would need DPW to address for safety, rather than volunteers. Ms. Murphy – Fire pit permit idea is interesting. Fires are not permitted on our properties currently, fire department unlikely to agree to a formal program. Illegal fire pits have been an ongoing issue out there so this is an interesting idea on possibly addressing it. Thank you to Mr. Mendez from the Commission for your work in the trail steward program. Trail steward program has been a huge help to the Commission for keeping tabs on our various properties. Former member had an orienteering program that was in operation at one time out there.

Melrose High School Environmental Club- Grace Donohue – Environmental club is looking for some hands on type projects out there. Finn McSweeney spoke with the Environmental club about invasive species that could be found in Melrose and where you could find them. Looking to schedule the invasive species mapping day for some time in the Spring. Melrose invasive species reference guide with pictures could possibly be created to help train/aid volunteers for the mapping day. Lots of examples around the pond and High school. School requires permission from the student activities director. Commission staff could review materials/provide oversight.

Ms Murphy - Tree planting program, question on some interest on trees being planted in remote areas. The Commission has had trouble in past on getting those trees watered. Permission to plant trees on City properties isn't likely to be difficult. Watering them will be the bigger problem.

Ms. Donohue- List of people in Melrose that have requested having a tree planted in front of their houses. Possibly an opportunity to help whittle down the list with these trees. \$5 to sponsor a tree. High Schoolers aren't the most reliable, especially since bulk of the students will be graduating seniors.

Mr. Sloan- Kiosk at Flagg Acres is pretty big and mostly empty at the moment. Some materials suggested to possibly fill out the kiosk such as invasive species information and/or a bigger laminated copy of the trail map for in there would be good additions. Staff mentioned that one of the trail stewards had wanted to put some mushroom

identification information in there. Boston Mycological Club may be able to offer help/materials.

Staff will be main contact person for coordination on these projects.

Trail memorial – Flagg Acres- Mary Samson was present to discuss a potential trail memorial. Her uncle, Paul Abare recently passed. He was an avid walker of the Melrose trails. Would like either a trail adoption/trail memorial with donation to create it and generate signage if needed. Commission hasn't had something like this before, we would be open to something but some more specifics required like a specific area/location. Mr. Abare lived on Ardsmoor road, walked areas near Mt.Hood golf course ponds. Would like family that still lives on Ardsmoor road to be able to walk to it and visit. Ms. Hickey suggested a plaque at a lookout point as a possible option.

Mr. Doucette isn't a fan of plaques/memorials. He thinks a bench or something that people would use/benefit from out there on the trails would be a good idea. A bench could have a plaque on it as well. Ms. Samson thought the bench was a good idea. Staff could take a look at the area and see if there was a spot that would be a good candidate for a bench. Ms. Hickey suggested the Seaview trails area. There might be a spot at the lookout there for the bench.

Discuss location at the next meeting. Staff will solicit feedback from trail stewards on possible bench locations as well and coordinate with Ms. Samson.

Reading Hill Ave illegal dumping issues and sign – Staff went out there and observed the Conservation land sign is still there. Mr Doucette doesn't care for no dumping signs, doesn't think they are effective. Staff plans to send out a letter to the entire street about the yard waste dumping. It isn't trash, it is leaves, grass clippings and other materials. Staff will inquire with immediate neighbors about their willingness to host a camera and include mention of camera on the property for yard waste dumping. Consensus on sending the letter to the neighbors, no sign needed. Possibly include mention of camera if issue persists at later point.

Eagle Scout Project – Flagg Acres/Mt.Hood – 3 Log bridges, “puncheons” proposed by an eagle scout candidate. Staff met with him and observed the proposed locations. All locations appear to be on Parks department property on Mt. Hood. Staff spoke with Parks Department superintendent for coordination. Mr. Docuette suggested all materials should be rot resistant, either pressure treated lumber or cedar and proper hardware for it. Standard hardware will corrode very quickly if used in pressure treated wood. Staff mentioned that the Eagle Scout candidate did have a question on if a particular trail use needed to be considered for the bridge design/width. Parks department should be able to handle that for further guidance. Mr. Doucette would like to have a minimum width of 2' or 3' to accommodate cross country ski use.

New/Old Business

Open Space projects- Ryan Williams and Finn McSweeney have recently started a new push for CPA being implemented in Melrose.

Resignations- Ms Murphy informed the Commission that fellow member Aaron Weieneth would be leaving the Commission. This will be his last meeting after serving

on the Commission for 8 years.

Ms. Murphy informed the Commission that she will be leaving the Commission as well, her last meeting will be the January 21 meeting. She's been serving on the Commission for 18 years.

Mr. Doucette will take over as the interim Commission chair at that point.

*Mr Weieneth's battery was low and suddenly lost his connection.

Mr. Doucette indicated that he will likely be moving out of Massachusetts next year.

Ms. Murphy indicated that at one point in the past, the Commission chose a chairperson every February. They also chose a rotating chair at one point taking turns with a different member running each meeting meeting.

Mr. Doucette recommended increasing Eric's schedule from the present 8-10 hours/week to two full days/week. We can use our fee account to make up the budget difference this year; then seek municipal funding in next year's budget.

Ms. Murphy will explore expanding budget for staff. Staff is budgeted for 8-10 hours per week.

Mayor's office has been handling appointments and applications for various commissions/boards. Now with two vacancies, there is more pressure for Mayor's office to fill them.

The next scheduled meeting will be Thursday, January 21, 2021 at 7:30 PM.

Motion by Ms. Murphy to adjourn. Mr. Doucette seconded the motion and it was voted 5-0 in favor.

Adjourn

8:47PM adjourn

Approved

Date.

Pursuant to the 'Open Meeting Law, ' G.L. 39, 23B, the approval of these minutes by the Commission constitutes a certification of the date, time and place of the meeting, the members present and absent, and the actions taken at the meeting. Any other description of statements made by any person, or the summary of the discussion of any matter, is included for the purpose of context only, and no certification, express or implied, is made by the Commission as to the completeness or accuracy of such statements.
