

Wallingford Conservation Commission ZOOM Meeting

Minutes from Meeting 4/27/2020

1. Called to order at 6:30pm. Present: Marc Pramuk, Carol Macleod, Ralph Nimtz, Jill Burkett. Deborah Scranton (arrived at 7pm). Visitors attending: Diane Baker; Sharon Nimtz; Steve Pytlik, Shannon Pytlik and sons, Monica Delorme, Kathy and Michael Luzander, Gary Fredette, Tom and Kim Phillips; Brian Finch; Rocco and Dana Jones; Lawrie Roundy; Sandi Switzer; Maria French and possibly others whose name I don't have.
2. No additions or deletions to Agenda
3. February 2020 Minutes were approved at 7:00 once a quorum was reached.
4. Annual reorganization Discussion – deferred until next meeting.
5. Item #5 transcript is at the end of the minutes.
6. Green Up Day Preparations. Green Up Day is rescheduled from May 2nd to May 30. WCC bag distribution and sign-up sheets will be on the front lawn of the Gilbert Hart Library from 8:30 am until 11:30 am. Although there will be one or two WCC members at the Library to answer questions if necessary, this will essentially be a self-service operation. If 6 foot social distancing and masks are still required, participants will have to wear masks and remain at least 6 feet apart. Carol will put notices on the Town Website and at least twice on FPF. WCC will need volunteers to provide 1 or 2 six foot tables and 2 chairs. Bags should arrive at Town Hall soon and Carol will pick them up. Carol will also bring pens and sign-up sheets. We will need a sign on each table that says: GREEN UP DAY SAFETY TIPS:
 - *Wear rugged work gloves
 - *Wear long pants and boots
 - *Always check for ticks and if possible wear a tick repellent
 - *Do not pick up sharp objects. Get an adult.
 - *Dispose of any sharps in a heavy plastic bottle with the lid screwed back on and marked "do not recycle"
 - *Wear bright colored clothing
 - *Review safety rules with kids
 - *Work facing oncoming traffic
 - *Use sunscreen
 - *Maintain 6 foot social distancing
 - *Wear face masks if still required

Carol checked with Transfer Station. They have no concern that they will be overwhelmed with trash Bags but as of now and probably as of May 30th used tires and lumber may not be brought to the Transfer Station.

We discussed encouraging someone with a truck to pick up bags that could be left at designated areas downtown and taken to Transfer Station. Wallingford Elementary School will not be doing their usual clean-up in downtown.

Carol will put up Green Up Day signs at Library and Transfer Station around May 15/16.

Please let Carol know if you can provide any items needed and if you are willing to work at the Library for a one hour shift. She would like to know who's doing what no later than May 20th.

7. Update/Next Steps on Stone Meadow. We need to have a work day as soon as allowed. Tree cutting in copse on Main Trail is a bit of a mess and needs to have some chain saw work on downed tree trunks and limbs removed and all moved to the center of the copse. Invasive removal by VYCC was tabled. We need to replace canoe launch sign.

WCC has gotten permission from Select Board to order ShurPak. We will need about 18 cu ft to complete the remaining 160 feet of the Main Trail. Tom Phillips indicated that he might be able to help us move the ShurPak with his tractor. I have reached out to the Pytlic kids who showed an interest in spreading the ShurPak. Carol will keep in touch with both Phillips and Kids and am hoping we can do this around May 20th. It must be done in time for the 5K Race which is scheduled for 7/19

8. Bees – WCC will not be purchasing bee colonies for this year. They are not available this year due to Covid-19.
9. Budget - WCC has spent \$1757.55 of its \$2500 budget with \$745.45 remaining. Of the expenses incurred, \$1050 will be transferred from the donation account to our budget at the end of this fiscal year. Assuming there are not many more budgetary expenses thru June 30th WCC may end up with a surplus of approximately \$1500. The donation account received two donations amounting to \$915. The balance in that account is approximately \$2765 plus \$915 or \$3680. On June 30th \$1050 will be transferred from donation acct. to budget leaving approximately \$2630 in the donation account.
10. Other old business. WCC will provide water and sliced oranges at Great Elfin Lake 5K on July 19th. Wallingford Day is July 18th and will be discussed at next meeting. Children's Program/storybook adventure on trails will begin on a date to be announced.
11. New Business – none
12. Adjourned at 7:50 pm.

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5. Bike trails. This a transcript of the meeting on this topic. In several instances I was unable to decipher what was being said and who the speaker was. If I left anyone, I apologize. This is the best I can do. It is very lengthy.

Bike Trails. Scheduled meeting on 4/13/2020 with Recreation Committee did not occur due to Corona Virus. There were several Wallingford residents present who commented on the Bike Jump path. Prior to opening the meetings, Zoom attendees were asked to give their name and

were asked if they wished to make comments regarding bike jumps. Attendees were warned that only one person at a time could speak and the speaker must identify themselves prior to speaking. Needless to say, it was a rather confusing meeting. The following is a synopsis of these speakers (as verbatim as I could get it). Guests were informed by WCC that this was just an informational meeting and that no decision on anything relating to the bike jumps would be made at this meeting. In addition to tonight's meeting, WCC hopes to get together with Recreation Department by the middle of May. WCC (and Recreation if they choose) is planning on putting a Survey in the June newsletter requesting that Wallingford residents comment on Stone Meadow and desired recreation possibilities for the area. Whenever it is feasible WCC will hold a Town Wide open meeting to also get a better idea of what residents want. The following individuals spoke at this time.

Rocco Jones – Objected to the use of the term “vandals” when referring to individuals who continued to expand Bike jumps in 2019.

Carol Macleod – We didn't know who had done it or why they had done it.

Steve Pytlik - You guys emailed me directly so you knew who had done it. When the trails were first discovered over there, all the emails came directly to me. You knew who had been working on the trails.

Carol Macleod – We assumed who was working on the trails this time. I was referring to the first time.

Steve Pytlik – There is no assumption. You knew. Yes my kids are working on the trails. Let's get permission for them to continue. It should not take since 2018 to get public input and coordinate with the Rec Committee. You're too controlling of that property. There are other folks who want to ride their bikes over there.

Carol Macleod -Well that is what I would like to hear. Are there other people who like to ride their bikes over the bumps? What is that called by the way.

Steve Pytlik – Bike jump. Called the ramps by the local kids.

Lawrie Roundy – I live here on Circular Ave. My kids love it over there.
My kids love the bike jumps. It is a healthy activity for kids that can be done outside.

Sharon Nimitz – reiterated that no decisions would be made at this meeting and that she wants things for the kids in Wallingford to do in this pandemic time and they don't have a lot of things to do right now and it would be good for Wallingford would come up with something to do. So anyway, I think we need to get them permission to be down the there.

Steve Pytlik – My response to Marc’s letter back in 2018 is exactly that. Let’s be productive and put them to work. It shouldn’t have taken two years to get to this point.

Carol Macleod – We had trouble getting together with the Rec . Their meetings were cancelled or they didn’t have quorums.

Steve Pytlik – Michelle Kenny and Bastian were on that Rec. Committee. It wasn’t until recently that you decided to follow-up on that meeting with Rec.

Carol Macleod – That’s not true Steve. We did attempt.

Shannon Pytlik – So I actual reached out to Michelle Kenney and Bastian Auer formerly members of the Recreation Committee and they both said they were never contacted in 2018 and 2019 regarding meeting with WCC to discuss bike jumps. It’s not fine to make things up. Can you show me where you did that. There must be a phone call or email. There must be some record of that.

Carol Macleod – I will look to see. All I know was the meetings were scheduled and then they were cancelled because they didn’t have quorums or for other reasons. This year they are going to happen and they will happen in May so we can work on what the people of Wallingford want and it’s not going to happen right away. So I’m sorry kids.

Steve Pytlik – That intersection of the bike trail and the hiking trail has always been a concern for you Carol. Back in 2018 the Select Board did not think of it as a liability, but now with the extra traffic, I agree that the trail should be rerouted in front of the bench in that corner and then down to the shurpak. That’s a project the kids can do and maintain social distancing and alleviate your concerns about potential liability. I am offering myself to reroute the trail. I want to put a motion before the WCC now that you have a quorum to reroute the trail.

Carol Macleod – I think you would get three or four no’s from the WCC.

Marc Pramuk – Excuse me. Can we have one person speak at a time. If I could just chime in. Those trails were built by a teenager in the 1990’s when this was the Park Association Managing the land. In 2003 the WCC was created and the land was transferred to the WCC. This was a sand and gravel pit for the past 17 years a group of people have extended the trails from those at Elfin Lake, around the meadow, have added benches, bluebird houses and a number of other things to complete a trail system. At no point did any of us even know that that was a trail. We saw lumps in the ground. This was a stump dump. A lot of things were dumped in it. And Mounds were simply that – mounds. Nobody knew that that was a biking trail and at no point during the last 17 years was that ever denoted as a trail or something that we need to take into account. So let’s understand this was not a preexisting trail in the entire duration of the WCC.

Shannon Pytlik – You’ve known about it for 2 years.

Carol Macleod– We didn’t know about during the initial “reconstruction”

Shannon Pytlik - I’m the one that created the map. I know where the trails are. Steve was actually the one who GPS’d it.

Steve Pytlik– I borrowed the GPS from the government and the trails on your map are all based on existing trails like Fisherman’s Elbow.....like the motor cross. Rim Trail is the original motor cross run. All the trails were existing.

Marc Pramuk – Except that trail your say preexisted as a a bike trail was not pre-existing and is not part of that system. It was something a teenager built and for over 20 years it went fallow. It was just lumps in the woods. We just didn’t know about it. And your saying that two years ago we did know about it. We learned about it when without permission somebody just built it.

Brian ? - We didn’t really build anything. We just maintained it to make it better.

Marc Pramuk – I completely understand that..

Brian ? – Those jumps were already there

Marc Pramuk – For 20 years they were just mounds in the woods that we had no awareness of. I think this just comes down to a simple communication issue.

Shannon Pytlik – We tried to communicate in 2018. We attended a WCC meeting (Select Board meeting. Since then there has been no action so these kids have been over there biking.

Steve Pytlik– It’s not just a communication issue, it’s a collaboration issue. We’ve been waiting 2 years. We need some collaboration with our children. They want to recreate. We have given you 2 years to collaborate. Let’s start the process now. Move the hiking trail and give them permission to continue to maintain the bike jumps.

Sharon Nimitz – I have been talking to people about this and this pre-existing path thing. Get rid of that verbiage because it is not a pre-existing thing (path) as far as anyone knows. Somebody built something in the 90’s or 80’s – whatever. That doesn’t matter. So then you found it and you decided to do something with it. But it wasn’t pre-existing bike path it was some kind of something. Nobody knew what it was. So can we get rid of that verbiage. What we are doing is trying to figure out what we are going to do now and in the future. Okay, it doesn’t matter that it was pre-existing or you think it was pre-existing. What’s going to happen to it now?

Steve Pytlik – Can these kids continue to work on these jumps?

WCC – No

Ralph Nimitz – I think we need a plan. I'm concerned of what your intent is. If we're already at the edge of the meadow, are you going to come into the meadow? Are you going to go down the hill and into that brush on the sides. Are you going to go up into the woods? Are you going to ride on the trails that we walk on?

Steve Pytlik – There are riders on the trails now.

Ralph Nimitz – That's good and who knows where they go.

Shannon Pytlik –

What I can say if I can speak is that we have been asking for a management plan for that property for two years and there isn't one. There is no management plan, there is no forest management plan. There is no recreation management plan. So we have equal concerns about how that property is going to be managed. It is public property and there should be public input and there should be a management plan that is developed and is... So I agree with that there has to be a plan and I am happy to help develop that plan. I have offered multiple times to develop that, and I would love to engage the kids in a meaningful manner instead of going back and forth about this. I would like to have a productive conversation with my children. They are really enjoying it and a lot of people are using those bike trails. And frankly a lot of people are really appreciating them – even more now than ever. We would really appreciate if you could meaningfully engage the children of this community. I could do it myself but I'm not on the Commission. So we just need to figure out how to move this forward in a productive way for our kids and our community.

Jill Burkett - There are 15 people on this call. It would be nice if they just state their name. Half the time I don't know who is speaking. I have been on this Commission a very long time and when Josh Gilman was on the Committee, he and I were hiking the trails and when we went by that forested area he said that this was where me and my friend used to ride our bikes all the time. So we walked in there and he showed me all the trails in there and so I've known about that area from when Josh was on the Commission. That was quite some time ago. I think the property is big enough for everyone to share. There has to be a way we can come to an agreement of as to what is best. But it does belong to the whole Town. We just have to agree on something because this is ridiculous. Why isn't the Select Board making determinations about this issue. I'm obviously missing something – why these kids can't be allowed to play in the woods.

Carol Macleod – Shannon I thank you and Jill I thank you. If our plan comes through, we will need all your help as we do the June newsletter - help with the survey questions and to help figuring out what people in the Town of Wallingford want for the area and when we do the other two steps.

Jill Burkett – Do we have the right to tell people they can't go over there? That's what I am hearing.

Marc Pramuk – To clarify we have actually put up signs encouraging multi use of the trails. The only thing we are objecting to is people without any prior notification going over and building things.

Jill Burkett - Well I do agree, that if bikers are going on the trail I do know that mountain bikers can tear up a trail but there's an understanding of where mountain bikes should be or shouldn't be because Mountain biking is a really awesome thing and could be a big draw to this community and these kids are our future so I think we need to invest in that. If they want to go to work shoveling shurpak.. . Everyone needs to participate not just. . .

Marc Pramuk - that simply rerouting that portion of Rim Trail into the meadow would solve the problem?

Marc Pramuk (WCC) – Bike jumps were built in the 1990's. In 2003 the WCC was created and later was given overview of Stone Meadow, adding trails, benches, etc. Majority of the WCC members knew nothing about the existence of these bike jump trails.

Ryan?? – WCC didn't build trails just resurrected trails.

Shannon Pytlik – There has been no collaboration for 2 years.

Sharon Nimitz - The bike bumps should not be considered a pre-existing condition. What we are trying to figure out is what's going to happen now. Keep it in the present.

Steve Pytlik – Can the kids continue to work on jumps?

Carol Macleod – No

Shannon Pytlik – WCC needs a Management Plan with public input. Happy to help engage kids in meaningful activity.

Jill Burkett – I knew about Josh's (Gilman) trails since the beginning. I think the property is big enough to share. We have to agree on something.

Carol Macleod – Yes, I appreciate your comments.

Marc Pramuk – We encourage multi-use of the trails, but not building on trails without permission.

Dana Jones – I have 3 kids and kids need something healthy to do.

Diane Baker – I have been listening to all this. I have just recently become involved on the Recreation Committee. We have been asked recently to become involved and we are going to be meeting in the next month. While I think it's a really great idea for us to have something there for kids, it should be done in a planned way - the way the Select Board has commissioned us to do. We absolutely need to share with all. I think the thing is the danger can be that if Kids get out there and tear apart or build or change without prior authorization from the Select Board. They're going to take our recommendations between Recreation and Conservation to move forward. Do we need to get going quickly – absolutely. The past is the past and everyone's pointing fingers at each other - and everybody's got a little bit of guilt in this thing. We all need to just put that aside and move forward and meet in May, do the survey, involve any kids who want to be involved but we just can't have anyone going down there and just moving things around without a set plan so this can work for all ages of the Community. Thank you.

Shannon Pytlik – I agree there needs to be a plan. I would like to see an overall plan and a Forest Management plan.

Tom Phillips – Are kids not allowed to ride their bikes or is the problem just mainly the digging and making jumps?

Marc Pramuk – Riding of the bikes is allowed. In fact it is encouraged. We have seen a lot of kids there and enjoying it. That's not the issue it's really that there have been a lot of changes and modifications to what's there and in order to make sure that it's safe and following some sort of plan as to where it's going to be and what's going to be included. That's what we are hoping to solicit potentially from tonight and especially from the newsletter questionnaire and public forum. What exactly do we want as far as features and attributes and capabilities? Do we gear it to 13 year old jumping bumps and not have something for younger kids. We want something for adults. We want to get some input as to what should be included in it's capabilities and then based on what the people in Town want put together develop a plan that says how do we design and build it and install it – where's the best place for it to exist, do we make a portion of it where it is and put an age designation and use designation on that area. That's what we are looking for if that helps.

Tom Phillips – I've got a tractor and I would be happy to go down there. It would be nice to flag off an area just for a bike park. When we did the playgrounds, we probably had 30 or 40 people. I think it's great for us as a community with the kids and older people to get down there and do things. It could be good. It would be nice to just flag off an area that is just a bike park. I think there is plenty of room down there as long as people are willing to help. It's just everybody getting down there. We could get together soon. And, of course, the Select Board has the last say in it anyway.

Kim Phillips – Stone Meadow is close to my heart. Daily I have spent hours down on those trails I have never had a problem with bike riders and I would like to see the trails shared by both. The whole area needs to be enjoyed by everybody and everybody should have a right to use it. And as far as the kids being down there, making the jumps, I couldn't think of anything better than kids just to be doing and being out there. It's probably unfortunate that it's on public land not private land. When I read the letters about vandalism, it bothered me. Down there trying to make a place for them to ride their bikes, we can work with them without getting upset; I think we should work with these kids. Make this a positive experience not a negative experience. If we can get these kids together and get them in a POSITIVE DIRECTION and doing these things positively, I think that would be terrific. This is really our future and there are a lot of parents here tonight and I am really grateful for that . I don't know a lot of people who aren't in support of this, except for a few. It would be really great if something could happen quickly. We should do whatever we can to help these kids because they need it. We need to work with the kids; Get the kids together to work positively. Something needs to happen quickly.

Dana Jones – My kids just discovered the jumps and have not missed a day and enjoyed it. I would like to find a way to make everyone happy. It's a public space, let's do it. It's our town.

Maria French – It's good to work together and the kids to learn about sustainable trail building with whomever they can work with to make the trails so they'll stay and so they aren't going to interfere and learn how our town works and discuss things in a civil way and listen to each other and appreciate each other's contributions. Because they (the kids) are the ones who will be taking over the Conservation Commission and Select Board. We want to show how the process can work and really help everybody.

Carol Macleod – We will keep in touch.

Steve Pytlik – So can we propose a motion to reroute the hiking trail around it before your next meeting and also continue to just maintain the jumps already there, not build any more, not expand the program. Maintain what's there. We have everybody here tonight, why can't you make a decision?

Marc Pramuk – No

Steve Pytlik – Why can't you collaborate, Marc?

Diane Baker - It's my understanding that we cannot make a decision tonight. We have said and I have heard others say it as well, we cannot make the decision. We have to follow the process given by the Select Board that we meet, we discuss, whether it's zoom or we meet down there. They can still use the path but we cannot change things. In my opinion until the Select Board makes that decision to do so, I don't see any reason why the kids can't continue using it the way it is and, as someone said a few minutes ago about following a process and having the kids

involved in it, so we are all a part of the plan. I think we need to follow what we have been missioned to do by the Select Board.

Steve Pytlik – you don't need Select Board approval to work on your trails. We want to reroute your trail that has the liability with the intersection.

Marc Pramuk - It's not all or nothing. It's not collaborate or not collaborate. From what I have heard, we are not at a point where we can say we have a plan and we are going to build and act on the plan. So there is no way I can say I'm in favor of building a whole new trail and rerouting it suddenly creating all this work because we don't know to what end.

Steve Pytlik – It's not a lot of work. Its about 100 feet. It won't take. . .

Debbie Scranton – We can all work together but we need to follow protocol and determine what needs to be done and approved by the Select Board.

There was a little more discussion, but somehow the tape recording of the meeting has been erased and I can't find it anywhere in my computer. Sorry.