

JOHNSON CONSERVATION COMMISSION

MEETING MINUTES

OCTOBER 9, 2018

Present: Lois Frey, Sue Lovering, Noel Dodge, Eric Nuse, Dean Locke, Denise Krause, Hillary Emick

Absent: Jackie Stanton, Laura Branca

Guests: Kelly Vandorn, Jacob Vandorn, Noah Pollack, Doug Molde, Linda Molde

Minutes weren't approved, as we jumped straight into discussion.

McCUIN ISLAND DISCUSSION

It was all about the campsites on the island, which were established in the deed without the CC's knowledge.

The Paddler's view of things:

- The main donor and the Vermont River Conservancy wanted recreation on the island. They got what they wanted.
- The Paddler's want a campsite on the river every +/-10 miles.
- They want stairs on the bank, to clear grass and shrubs, a "bench" set into the bank, room for three tents, plastic composting toilet or privy (which may wash away), to fence the site and hope people will stay in bounds, all to be maintained by the Paddler's.
- Noah will write up guidelines and a maintenance agreement that will be between the VRC and the CC.
- We can't erect a no camping sign.
- They can use bog bridging for protection.
- The CC may not temporarily remove present infrastructure until an inventory can be done.
- The VRC will look for alternative sites further north.
- He feels they can contain the site and that there will be light use. Everything will be fine.

The CC's position:

- We had this situation forced on us, with no one having consulted us about the island's fragility and its circumstances. There was no warning that there would be camping and toilets.
- We were asked to consider McCuin's Island last year and decided that it should have no development and should remain a sanctuary.
- We need a survey and inventory of the plant life and year round resilience. The island is very fragile and we did damage by just walking on it last spring. It should cover two

growing seasons to capture the spring ephemerals. Maybe Arrowwood can do it. Noah suggested there may be grant money available.

- Noel reports that the island is one of the most fragile spots on the river and the only place that hasn't already been affected adversely by development. There is already impact from the river. If there's a direct adverse impact on the natural environment by recreators, that would result in camping closure.
- We need an invasive species removal plan, especially for bush honeysuckle. There may be a grant available through the Green Mountain Fund. Noah says they the VRC can raise the match.
- Spring is the most sensitive time. We can prohibit camping until summer and around nesting, etc.
- Because it's accessible from the Rail Trail, it may become a recreational area for more than the Paddler's. We can limit camping to one tent site and may prohibit it if things such as ramp and fiddlehead collection happen. Stairs make it too easy and inviting.
- The site needs to stay on the south side, out of sight of the Rail Trail.
- A composting toilet is a necessity.
- We can post remonstrations on the kiosk. (Eric's suggestion: "Protected by Mr. Smith and Mr. Wesson". The motion was passed with a show of laughter.) We can add educational material, too, beginning in spring, 2019

Selectman Doug's view:

- The CC has to cooperate with the VRC's decisions.
- Perhaps there should be an ordinance around camping in all public areas.
- The Selectboard should let the CC negotiate terms with the VRC.

Noah will draft an agreement between the VRC and the town that Lois will present to the Selectboard and get a confirmation of the CC's authority. The town has delegated stewardship to the CC. What's that worth?

BEARD'S RECREATION

New stairs are needed from the parking area to the lower level, which can be funded from our budget. Noah Pollack will come up with a plan that will involve Lydia Menendez. We can ask the Public Works Department for help.

ARCHERY AT PRINDLE

Denise would like to conduct a forested archery course at Prindle on four Saturdays from 10/27 through 11/17. She needs to weedwhack a the path into the woods, mark the boundaries, and set up targets that will be left against the bank along the brook for the month. Sue will loan a weedwhacker and Eric offered his cart to carry things in. Lois suggested making a sign to explain the targets and Hilary offered to laminate it. Denise will email some dates for possible work days. Eric suggested skipping being there on opening day of deer hunting and that kids can wear orange the rest of the time.

JE NATURE TRAIL

Nothing happening due to difficulty finding a time when all three team members can meet. They'll keep trying and intend to make this a mostly winter project.

Rural ROWs

State team has surveyed Johnson but no meeting has been held yet.

CONSERVATION RESERVE FUND

We need guidelines and an overview of the fund, as well as a request for funds form. Georgia and Richmond have good examples. Eric volunteered to start a rough draft of evaluations and priorities.

We can put out a donation jar at March Gladness. Meanwhile, we need to think about what to ask the Select Board for at Town Meeting.

HARVEST FESTIVAL

We've been asked to appear with interactive activities at the Harvest Festival on Saturday, October 27, at the Legion Field. Hillary will look into getting the large erosion control display table.

MISC:

- Apple tree release at Gomo has been postponed to early December. Are we optimists or what?
- Dave Lamell billed \$580 for brush hogging Gomo. He didn't do the steeper hills, as his tractor couldn't take them.

Adjourned at 8:53.

The next meeting is on Tuesday, November 13, at the Library at 6:45.

Submitted by Sue Lovering, Secretary.