

JOHNSON CONSERVATION COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
AUGUST 11, 2022

Present: Lois Frey, Sue Lovering, Noel Dodge, Peter Hammond, Jared Jasinski, Dean Locke, Jackie Stanton, Denise Ashman
Absent: Carrie Watson

The June and July minutes were approved.

Lois asks that we all send her our current email address, so she can update her list. Send to Lois, not to all.

CODDING HOLLOW ROAD/GOMO VISIT

Lois, Noel, and Dean visited Gomo with road foreman Jason Whitehill and VASA Trail Coordinator Ethan Hill on July 28, 2022 to assess the work done by the ATV club on a section of road, and to assess proposed road work. The proposed work was requested at a selectboard meeting, where it was pointed out that the JCC should have been notified for our input on the matter.

About a 200-yard section of trail/road was rebuilt outside of the ROW last year by VASA, with the permission of then-foreman Hugh Albright; moving the trail onto town forest land should not have been allowed. The work was well done, however, and met Noel's standards. Now they'd like to re-route another piece of trail around where the road has been destroyed by ATVs and erosion. Do we want to allow that and do we want to set that precedent of the trail being on more forest land beyond the ROW?

We decided that;

- No, we do not. The new road should be kept within the Coddington Hollow Rd. ROW. In the event of the new road failing, the original trail should be re-built.
- The proposed environmental impact should be avoided; therefore we do not support any more encroachment on forest land.
- The Vermont stormwater program should be involved when bridges and culverts are involved. If a Municipal Stormwater General Permit is needed, VASA should have one.
- Any work in wetlands should be signed off.
- The town should know who will do work and have a detailed map of any proposed project. Inexperienced workers can cause much damage.

Lois and Noel prepared the statement below for presentation at the August 15th Selectboard meeting:

Following the July 28th site visit to Coddington Hollow Road, attended by Johnson Conservation Commission (JCC) members Lois Frey, Noel Dodge and Dean Locke, the JCC met at their regularly scheduled meeting on August 12th with the VASA proposal as an agenda item. At that meeting the Conservation Commission concluded that VASA should not be allowed to move out of the roadway onto forest land after this current project. The trail should be kept within the Coddington Hollow Road ROW. (Jason has requested cost information from VASA.)

The ATV traveled portion of Coddington Hollow Road is in rough shape. The steep incline down into Waterville has continually eroded for decades. A condition not likely to change without a significant investment in time and materials. The existing waterbars installed by VASA are working to keep most water from running down the trail, but the trail use degrades them quickly on the steep portions. The current ATV "bypass" of the worst section near the bottom, clearly

strayed onto town lands and out of what appears to be the ROW. However, that work is complete and appears to be stable, including the stream crossing that is now a ford instead of a bridge. Given this, it seems prudent to allow the continued use of this Bypass until such time as it needs more work to remain viable. At that point the JCC thinks the trail should be relocated back onto the ROW and the bypass abandoned.

For future projects, we suggest citing specific standards including trail design standards to be used and to include a detailed map of any project. Review and sign-off (if required) by the State Stormwater and Wetlands Programs or permits where necessary. If the project is covered by the Municipal Roads General Permit (MRGP) it would be good to know that. We would be interested to see a list of who is doing the construction work and their qualifications to be sure qualified people are doing the work. Additionally, we would like to see the Landowners Permission Form reviewed and signed every year or two by a VASA representative and the Selectboard and the Highway Foreman with a check-off by the Conservation Commission.

MISSION STATEMENT, NEXT STEPS

We need to set a time deadline for review and to choose key people to carry out the review. We'll be at the next selectboard meeting to follow up with the ATV road question. This will be the first of hopefully many times we'll weigh in on proposals.

We will wow them.

OFFICERS

Peter was nominated to be the vice chair and was unanimously and enthusiastically voted in. Nobody wanted to be the chair of vice, so many thanks to Peter. All other officers will remain at their stations.

GOMO KIOSK AND OTHER REPAIRS

Up to \$200 was approved to be spent for materials to repair the Wescom and McLure's bat houses and the Gomo kiosk. Railing materials have already been bought.

The Wescom set will be addressed first. It's still upright but leaning, so Dean will prop it up if possible. Since the new method of support only holds two houses, it would be good to save the one we have at Wescom.

GOMO FIELDS

We'll wait till next year to brush hog and at that time will consider hiring someone who has a standard cutter rather than a flail.

Once again, we talked about scheduling a chainsaw work day to get the small tree growth around apple trees and that which was missed the last two times it was hogged. Of course, it may not be so small now. Maybe this year's the charm!

BEARD'S

It was agreed to add a sign denoting the handicapped-accessible picnic table (handicapped picnic table just sounds so weird) underneath the sign at the parking area.

It was also agreed to get wood chips from the village to put underneath it. We can wheelbarrow them down from the parking area.

MOWING ROADSIDES

The Beautification Committee has asked for our support in not mowing the roadsides in order to preserve their looks and pollinating plants. We agreed that mowing wildflowers is nuts and will support it, with the caveat that mowing of things like garlic mustard and parsnip before they bloom is necessary. Can the road crew tailor their mowing? Not likely.

This would be a good subject for a March Gladness talk.

MISC

- Among other things, VASA is asking to have their costs reimbursed if in future the town rescinds permission for their use of the trail on Coddington Rd. The selectboard wasn't thrilled.
- Jared's suggestion that we could raise funds with a bake sale featuring home-made ammo is a gem. Gluten and sugar free!
- We'd like to encourage higher standards from anyone ruminating upon a project.
- The Paddlers' website still shows McCuin Island having 4 campsites for 12 people. Sue will contact Noah Pollack about changing it.
- Noel and Eben will check out the situation on McCuin.
- The Paddlers want \$1200 for their stairs that were stored in then destroyed by a shed that collapsed. Aw gee.

Adjourned at 8:45

Submitted by Sue Lovering, Secretary

Next meeting is at 6:30 at the Municipal Building on September 8.