

Natick Conservation Commission
April 2, 2020

The Meeting was called to order at 7:00 by Chairman, Matt Gardner. Members present: Doug Shepard, George Bain, Mike Downey, MK Schneeweis, Jeff Richards, Kathy Rehl.

The meeting was held via Zoom online conference platform due to the state of emergency surrounding COVID-19 and the requirements to social distance and limit large gatherings. The meeting was recorded and aired on the Government Channel. Votes were taken through roll call method.

Notice of Intent continuation – 47 Water Street

DEP has not issued a file number to date. Mr. Gardner asked for a roll call vote to continue to April 16th, Kathy Rehl moved, Doug Shepard seconded, all in favor 7-0.

Doug Shepard, yes
George Bain, yes
Mike Downey, yes
MK Schneeweis yes
Jeff Richards, yes
Kathy Rehl, yes
Matt Gardner, yes

Notice of Intent continuation – DEP #233-834 – 1 Randall Court

Marianne visited the site and took photos Tuesday. The exposed culverts were covered. Silt sock installed around catch basin. Matt Gardner stated the site has been brought up to standards as requested.

Kathy Rehl asked is there a landscape plan. They didn't submit a plan, but will landscape. The Commission wants the Applicant to stabilize the slope toward Middlesex Path. One condition is to get a planting plan to provide feedback. The area on bottom of slope which part is town parcel will landscape that area as well. Maybe plant up the slope and will let Marianne know to review as requested.

Mr. Gardner asked for a motion to close, MK Schneeweis moved, Mike Downey seconded, all in favor 7-0.

Doug Shepard, yes
George Bain, yes
Mike Downey, yes
MK Schneeweis, yes
Jeff Richards, yes
Kathy Rehl, yes
Matt Gardner, yes

Mr. Gardner asked for a motion to issue Order of Conditions with the following Special Conditions:

1. Catch basins cleaned out once construction is complete.
2. Submit landscape plan for approval by Commission prior to planting.

Kathy Rehl moved, George Bain seconded, all in favor 7-0.

Doug Shepard, yes
George Bain, yes
Mike Downey, yes
MK Schneeweis, yes
Jeff Richards, yes
Kathy Rehl, yes
Matt Gardner, yes

Commission agreed to lift the Enforcement Order on the property.

Mr. Gardner asked for a motion to release the Enforcement Order, Doug Shepard moved, Mike Downey seconded, all in favor 7-0.

Doug Shepard, yes
George Bain, yes
Mike Downey, yes
MK Schneeweis, yes
Jeff Richards, yes
Kathy Rehl, yes
Matthew Gardner, yes

MVP Grants - Jillian Wilson-Martin

Jillian Wilson-Martin, Sustainability Coordinator, gave a presentation on the MVP Program and Action Grants. The Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program (MVP) provides support for cities and towns to plan for and increase their climate change resiliency. Natick was one of the first communities to receive MVP

designation under the program in 2017 and is eligible to receive Action Grant funding to complete assessments and implement resiliency projects.

The town is applying for three projects:

1. Public outreach and consensus building regarding the future of the South Natick Dam.
2. Analysis and identification of a clean energy resiliency solution to support continued fresh water treatment and delivery.
3. Analysis and identification of a clean energy resiliency solution to support sustained services at Wilson Middle School.

There is also a Regional Action Grant application, which requests the Commission's support. The town would collaborate with other communities in the Charles River Climate Compact (formed last year) on a \$200,000 Regional Action Grant application focused on developing a watershed model to forecast possible flooding and flood reduction strategies to implement across the Charles River Watershed.

There are approximately twenty communities along the Charles River where flooding occurs and there has been strong interest in obtaining more data on flooding.

The Action Grants require a 25% match. Jillian requested the Commission to allocate \$10,000 for the grant match. Additionally, Marianne and Jillian would contribute at least \$5,000 in in-kind labor hours to the project. Other communities who join this regional grant application will also contribute a monetary or labor match. The watershed needs to secure at least \$50,000 or more in match funding to support the project.

Kathy Rehl asked what other towns are involved on this effort. Julie Wood, Deputy Director of the Charles River Watershed Association, shared that there are thirty-five communities in the watershed. Upper and middle watershed areas show a lot of support.

Jeff Richards asked would this help answer the South Natick Dam removal questions. This would be independent of the dam. Matt Gardner stated he has no interest in this contributing to the dam research. Jeff wants to ensure there is no bias viewed by the Commission if they were to help pay for the match for this grant. The

Commission is not stating whether they are in support or not of dam removal if they decide the help fund the match for a Charles River flooding study.

Jillian stated a timeline for this project versus dam project. The dam alternative analysis will be done June/July. The regional Action Grant will not begin until September if awarded and would end June/July 2021. This is a long term project to understand flooding on the Charles River.

Mike Downey asked if is there a charter for the Charles River Climate Compact? Free to join, but not much detail. Matt Gardner asked if the group is a 501c3, how would that work. Jillian said Commission's contributions would go directly to consultant.

Jillian stated Natick would be the lead community and applicant on the grant. Mike Downey asked if breaching dams along the Charles River would be part of the model? Jillian stated it would be part of, but could be explicit it's not a strategy for Natick. Would not want to create a conflict of interest.

Jillian asked if she could have a decision next meeting as the grant will be announced any day now and will likely be due in May.

Matt Gardner would like to review Jillian's memo.

Commission agreed it's an intriguing project. Everyone agreed to come back in two weeks. In the meantime, if any questions of what it includes, timing, etc., Marianne will give them to Jillian and will discuss next meeting.

Trails and Forest Stewardship Committee restructuring

Marianne Iarossi met with committees in January to discuss restructuring the Town's open space and trails related committees. Each committee's roles and missions were identified. What is missing is a Town entity representing/managing the maintenance of Natick's open space and trails. We don't have a stewardship group or plan. How can we reenergize some of these committees and find a place for stewardship.

Currently, the Commission appoints the Town Forest and Trails Maintenance Committees. The recommendation is to dissolve the two committees and consolidate and establish a new Trails and Forest Stewardship Committee.

Discussed function of Town Forest, expanding to more members and have sub committees. Peter Perkins would like to see what the problems are and how will this solve them. It would be a good time to clarify and come up with strategies. Merging committees doesn't address how will they be addressed and how and why we are doing it.

Marianne Iarossi stated simply, we need a committee focused on maintenance. Peter Frykman suggested stewardship. There are communication issues across boards and a staff person (Marianne) would be responsible for helping remedy this. Presently, some committees don't communicate with one another.

This would also be an opportunity to assess what the stewardship needs and priorities are. Some Trails Maintenance and Town Forest members lost interest. There is a great deal of enthusiasm for trails and activities channeled in useful ways. Peter Frykman is in favor of consolidation, but also to have an open door to help accomplish their goals.

Martin Kessell, Open Space Advisory Committee member, thinks the critical mass is one thing. There is a lack of leadership and organization. Marianne has done a lot to bring everyone together. Signage on trails, funding, vendors, location, material. One committee could debate all that. One person could investigate and Commission could fund the projects.

Some people don't want to sit on a committee, they would prefer to cut back growth on trails, mark the trails, etc. Some prefer to organize.

Marianne stated we have the talent, but need to lock down who they are and help identify stewards. A new Committee could organize, then there could be subcommittees or stewards doing the work on specific open spaces and trails.

Kathy Rehl stated we need to be kept informed who the stewards are and document that eyes are on priorities. Matt – the burden would be on the committee to decide. Likes the idea of subcommittees.

Marianne stated we can go back in two years if we don't like this process. The only way to see if this would work is to try it out.

Matt Gardner - we would decide whether 9-11 members to be appointed.

Commission can restructure the committees this evening and vote on the new committee charter another time.

Mr. Gardner asked for a motion to dissolve the Town Forest Committee and Trails Maintenance Committee and establish the Trails and Forest Stewardship Committee (TaFS), Kathy Rehl moved, Doug Shepard seconded, all in favor 7-0.

Kathy Rehl, yes
Doug Shepard, yes
George Bain, yes
MK Schneeweis, yes
Mike Downey, yes
Jeff Richards, yes
Matthew Gardner, yes

Marianne stated a TaFS charter is on the Google Drive for review, but it's not formal.

Commission's Signatures

Mr. Gardner asked for a motion to authorize Marianne Iarossi, Agent, to sign documents on Commission's behalf, George Bain moved, Doug Shepard seconded, all in favor 7-0.

Kathy Rehl, yes
Doug Shepard, yes
George Bain, yes
MK Schneeweis, yes
Mike Downey, yes
Jeff Richards, yes
Matthew Gardner, yes

COVID-19 issues – Conservation Properties

Matt Gardner shared that Casey from the Natick Community Organic Farm, has concerns with increased visitors to farm and the risk to employees. As landlords, Commission can close the farm to the public if Casey feels the need. He will be in touch.

Martin Kessell has been monitoring most of the Commission properties. The Town Forest is being heavily used. At Pegan Cove he observed seven different groups of people. More people are congregating. Broadmoor was over-crowded and closed down by the Trustees of Reservation.

Matt Gardner stated we will keep an eye on the Commission properties' usage and go from there whether we need to restrict their use. The Commission would like to try and keep the properties open as much as possible especially during these times.

Minutes

March 5th

March 19th

Kathy Rehl asked to change porous paving on March 5th minutes. Commission will review and vote the next meeting.

Mr. Gardner asked for a motion to adjourn, George Bain moved, Kathy Rehl seconded, all in favor 7-0.

Kathy Rehl, yes

MK Schneeweis, yes

Doug Shepard, yes

George Bain, yes

Jeff Richards, yes

Mike Downey, yes

Matthew Gardner, yes

Meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm.