

Beacon Falls Conservation Commission
10 Maple Avenue
Beacon Falls, CT 06403



BEACON FALLS CONSERVATION COMMISSION
Monthly Meeting
May 11, 2021
MINUTES
(Subject to Revision)

1. Call to Order /Pledge of Allegiance/Roll Call

Co-Chair KJ called the meeting to order at 6:30 P.M

Members Present: Kristen Jabanoski (KJ), Andrew Keane (AK), Ruth Burritt (RB), Ellie McAdam (EM)

Members Absent: Lori Paradis Brant (LPB), Lou Santora (LS), Ivana Potje (IP)

Others Present: None

2. Read and Approve Minutes from Previous Meetings

Motion to approve the April 13, 2021 meeting minutes with revision of "ATVs are helping to clear the trails", KJ/RB, all ayes.

3. Announcements – KJ - we were at that BOS/BOF Budget Workshop on 4.20.21. We talked about the upcoming budget year and how we would use the funding for the Commission and Lantern Ridge. They Boards did just want to clarify our plans with Lantern Ridge on making it safe, improving the situation after the tornado, to provide maintenance and keep the ruggedness and natural space of the trails. AK – I presented on our open space planning and strategy. I reviewed our criteria with them and how we are going to evaluate parcels and natural resources of conservation areas. KJ – the First Selectman asked how other towns fund their open space acquisitions. AK – the fee in lieu of could go to towards that fund and there are State grants available. RB – when a developer does a project, would the Commission rather see money from them, or an area set aside? AK – that all depends on the parcel. RB – the Land Use Committee very rarely meets. AK – that is an issue, the Land Use Committee is a vital committee. EM – do we have any information about the upcoming training? KJ – yes, I have the dates for the CCLC Virtual Conference. They are June 8, 10, 15 and 17th. They have different workshops and discussions on each day. I do not have the link right now but can send it out.

4. Comments from the Public - None

5. Review of Town Boards & Commissions minutes – KJ – I did look through the BOS meeting minutes from last night and there was not much that applied to us. RB – other Towns are not really meeting since COVID. AK – I attended the IWWC and introduced myself to the Committee and discussed having more of a working relationship between the Committees and that a member of our Commission would like to attend their monthly meetings. Our introduction was well received. It would also be good to have someone attend the P&Z meetings. KJ – is there anything we should be looking out for on IWWC agenda? AK – they had some applications on their agenda, I believe Hopp Brook was approved. KJ – P&Z would be the next step in the process.

6. Correspondence – none

7. Old Business

a. Lantern Ridge Park Updates (Jabanoski/Keane)

- **Lantern Ridge Tree Work** – KJ – the Town has a contract with Ed the Treeman. Erin in Finance sent out an email about that. I met with the tree company last Friday and we discussed the entry way. There is still a large area of debris on the ground. It is not a safety risk for falls but there is wood on the ground. They also looked about halfway down the trail at an Ash tree that is hanging. There is an invasive bug that is killing them. The tree is overhanging and is a hazard. I will send out the estimate that they provided. The total was \$5,800. The hung-up Ash tree was only \$600, but the cleanup of the debris was the large majority. AK – the vendor determined the debris was a potential fire hazard and they also contacted the Fire Marshal to get a professional opinion on the wildfire risk of the debris. AK – we have the quote and there are some pending items from the Fire Marshal, but do we want to consider, in case the debris is a fire hazard, do we want to approve the expenditure up to \$5,000 for removal. RB – if this is a fire hazard, they may have something in their budget to assist with this. AK – we do have the \$5,000 that expires at the end of June to take care of hazards. **AK – motion to approve up to \$5,000 of the Lantern Ridge Maintenance Fund to take care of leaning tree and debris in the front area if deemed a fire hazard, with the intent on approaching the Fire Department on their professional opinion on the nature of the debris and if they have funds to assist, KJ, all ayes.**
- **Lantern Ridge Plant Survey** – KJ – the Park Ranger received a call from the Native Plant Trust recently and they are planning on doing a survey for the Mountain Spleenwort population. It is a fern that Lantern Ridge may have a population of. If anyone wants to join the survey and meet with the botanist, they are welcome to attend. RB - The company is from Framingham, MA. EM – what is the difference between Barberry and Knotweed? KJ – Knotweed looks like bamboo and grows quickly. EM – does it have berries and reddish leaves? RB – that is bayberry.
- **Other** – AK – April 22nd was Earth Day, and the parking lot was overflowing. The Girl Scouts were there any they staked out parts of the trail and completed trail maintenance. AK – we are also working on the trail map and posted it on the Facebook page. KJ – the Kiosk is operational again. AK – it cost \$88.00 for the plexiglass. RB – how about the frame? AK – it is done, I completed it. RB – it appears that there is plenty of space to post items. AK – yes, it is a huge board. **Motion made by KJ to reimburse AK for the \$88.00 repair, RB seconded, all ayes. AK abstained.** AK – the trail that goes out to the Seymour Town line has a couple of stream crossings. As an adult you can easily get across but when the Girl Scouts were there they did slip into the stream. A project that I would like to complete with the Girl Scouts would be to build some minor bridges over those areas. I looked at the lumber at Home Depot and I could build some minor bridges for about \$30.00. The Girl Scouts are doing their silver award project, and this would be a good item. RB – sometimes the water can get high, and the wood may rot with the water seepage. AK – yes, now is the time to do it. The size of the stream does depend on the rain. The design would be to keep the lumber as little as possible. RB – we may want to use a PVC or something that will not rot. **Motion made by KJ to build simple bridges with the Girl Scouts up to \$125.00, seconded by RB, all ayes.**

- b. Current Development Projects in Town – KJ – I know we discuss Hopp Brook. AK – there was an item for IWWC for a subdivision approval, but the public hearing was cancelled. The proposed subdivision was off Bethany Road. The application is probably available at Town Hall.

8. New Business

- a. Fire Conditions Signage – RB – I contacted Cal and showed him the pictures. He did say there were certain guidelines to place Smokey. We do not really need Smokey, but we believe it should be in the center of Town preferably in front of the Fire House. My other

thought is cost, and can we get someone to build it? The Fire Marshal and Chief are supportive, we just need to work out the details regarding permission, cost etc. I did invite Cal to the meeting, but I will follow up with him. KJ – I think it is a great idea and maybe Park & Rec would be interested as well.

- b. Beacon Falls Conservation Page – Town Website – KJ – Maybe we should table this until next month when more members are present. We have made a few updates. RB – we previously did bios for commissioners. KJ – that is a great idea. There is a lot of great information, but we may want to develop new content.
- c. Beacon Falls 150th Anniversary Activities – KJ – Mike Krenesky is the person working on this and it is scheduled for June 27th from 1:00p-3:00p at the Fire House. I do not know how much is planned yet, but I know they are looking to bring entertainment and food trucks. We discussed the Commission having a booth and sharing some information or maybe partner up with Park & Rec. and provide information on our trails etc.

9. **Open Space Strategy and Planning** – AK – the Conservation town site as a map, however the COG has a map as well that is nice. The map gives the acreage and the committed open space of the town. I am working with the COG and the GIS mapping person on updating the map. The most current is 2017. I have also reached out to Rich Minnick on what should be updated, and the consensus is that we have not gained or given away any open space. I did ask the COG to include labels from Pent Road, Toby's, Veteran's park and all the main parks. The goal is to update the 2017 map to reflect 2021 and then get a large copy. KJ – do we want to wait until next month to vote on the open space criteria? AK – just a high-level background, Lori and I acquired this spreadsheet from Windsor, and it provides a lot of criteria for evaluating open space. **I propose that we vote on adopting the criteria as a starting point to build off from, RB/EM, all ayes.** AK – this will serve as a guideline when developments are considered. This will help guide decision making. The next step is to evaluate where Beacon Falls is with open space, along with strengths and weaknesses. RB – and make sure it is adhered to. KJ – yes, I think the plan will help. AK – it would be helpful if the Commission started to think about and evaluate the current open space in town for proposed use. Some open space in town does not have an official use. Looking at the strengths and weaknesses, where we currently stand the Town is 26% open space, 1,200 acres of State land, 50 acres of land trust and about 400 acres of municipal open space. We have quite a bit of open space. RB – I just hope it stays that way. KJ – I think that is where promoting the open space to the public is important. AK - This plan is particularly important for the Town as the development pressure increases. Having a concrete plan is important. We have a lot of State land, but one issue is accessibility to the State Forest. For the east block, the only access within Beacon Falls is by Cross Street. There is no access to the east block from the south side. When we look at the west block, the main access is Cold Spring Road. The State owns that road and in 2013 they closed it. The First Selectman advocated last year for it to be reopened. The weakness is that the Town does not have control of that entry point. Pent Road Complex borders but you cannot access the purple trail. It is too steep. I think this also involves talking to Town officials. There is a lot of knowledge out there to incorporate and formulating the strategy. Tools for executing the strategy, we have 10% set aside or a minimum 1 acre or money in lieu of for development.

10. **Petition from Commissioners** – RB – I do not know when our election process is supposed to take place, but I bet it is overdue. AK – I think it is in the odd year. RB - There is a requirement for secretary. AK – the Conservation Commission should be prepared to appoint someone for the Land Use Committee. It is suggestion that P&Z refer to the Land Use Committee when needed. AK - I will reach out to Rich Minnick about starting the Land Use Committee again.

AK – for new homeowners we are partnering with Park & Rec doing maps for the Congregational Church welcome packets for new town residents.

11. **Payment of Bills** - None

12. **Executive Session (if needed)** - None

13. **Adjournment**

Motion made by KJ to adjourn the meeting at 8:10PM, AK seconded by all ayes.

Respectfully submitted,

Kerry McAndrew
Clerk, Conservation Commission