

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by Chairperson Rich Dionne

Members Present: Richard Dionne, Mike Lamoureux, Ron Lapierre, Roberta Lacey, Joe Pedro, & David Landry

Members Absent: Leslie Bowen (excused)

Guests: Bill Eccleston, Brian Levesque, & Mike Longenbaker

- 1) **Approval of prior meeting's Minutes:** Motion was made to accept the January Minutes (Motion made by Ron Lapierre; Seconded by David Landry – passed unanimously)
- 2) **Wallum Lake Dam/Canoe Launch:** The water level is 584.7. Rich recapped the information Jeff McCormick, Director of DPW, provided at the January BCC meeting. Rich emailed Jeff McCormick and Mike Wood about an update from our last meeting. Jeff provided the BCC with a letter from DEM that he received, stating that DEM has received the applications and the Permit application has been forwarded to the Office of Water Resources for review. Rich met with Jeff this morning to review the information. The application is strictly for the water level heights. Engineers at DEM said the town must submit a request for wetlands determination. Jeff stated he received the hydraulic study that has been submitted to the town. Not report yet from the town. Capital Improvements programs from Mike Wood will have one option, all are subject to Town Council approval. Permits must be done first, then work will be done for the next season on the dam.

Public comment asked about the pipe size of the spillway. Mike Lamoureux gave an update from the Budget Board, stating both pieces went through the Budget Board for the application to enlarge the pipe size (engineering work, etc). Submit second project where they are looking for state fund grants to work on the dam- pending grant process. Rich spoke to Jeff to see what type of timetable there might be on this project. Jeff said it could take a couple of years. The project is well on its way.

Rich asked the public for any questions. Public expressed concerns with the confirmation that the water levels will be set. If the town budget was passed for \$20,000, does this confirm the project will happen. Discussion on water levels ensued. Bill Eccleston talked about the long cove area, and how there are endangered species over there, & how changing the water levels will affect these areas. Joe Pedro talked about consideration of the levels of water lower on the water chain – talks about closing the dam. Joe Pedro made mention and thanked Rich for all his service on the various projects over the years.

- 3) **Nipmuc Trail:** Reviewed DEM Fisher Study Report, and game camera pictures. DEM successfully caught and tracked 2 fishers. Rich named the male fisher "Jerry". The female was named "Fink". Mike Lamoureux asked if we should publish the report online. Discussed whether it is a report or research that may contain sensitive information, consideration was to keep it offline, for now. The Conservation Commission is happy with the research and the reporting being done at the Nipmuc Trail area through URI and DEM, and encourages future relationships. Discussed other projects including the catching of bear fur to determine the different paths of bears though out time, as well as the significance for studies throughout the state.

Mike Lamoureux will spearhead getting descriptive documentation for updating our pamphlets to create new ones. Need to get QR codes ready, and get funding.

Rich would like to walk the property, clean up and ensure safety on all trails. Ron and Rich talked about rerouting the walkway to the right of the water bar area to make the trail safer, best idea to fix that area. Need to map the trails for all loops. Ron would like to get maps on the kiosks to give a rough idea for patrons, then fine tune it. Ron would like to get out and see what we are up against after the winter season. There might be people accessing the trails on our property, but need to confirm exact property lines. Bill Eccleston mentioned the Onyx Hunter app is really great for tracking property lines. Owner properties are listed so we can pin down our lines. Err on the side of caution when determining property lines.

Discussed working maps and utilizing technology. Brian Levesque talked about a report done by DEM regarding this property. It is a 30 page report with overlays of trails and land management surveys. This might be something we can start with to get trail mapping-online document that could be downloaded.

Ron Lapierre has documentation from 1990 that documents trees, with soil sampling to determine tree species favorite soils. David Grieg oversees helping with surveys. There are multiple reports that discuss property, both with important details.

Bill Eccleston discussed report on Branch River, which would be of interest to the commission. RI Natural History has reports on budgeting details from David Grieg to find possible options for grant funding for future projects. Ron talked to Natural History Report, which is a private survey that talks of historical parts of town that are important to history and should be protected. This is important for future talks for the conservation commission budgeting. Conservations Opportunity Map has details for information.

- 4) **Gateway Sign:** Rich said for the past 10 years, we have had Esposito Landscaping do the landscaping and they have done a wonderful job and we get a great deal on the maintenance. To date, Esposito Landscaping has been able to stay under a budget of \$1,000. For the season. Anything over \$1,000 will require the job go out to bid. Espositos has reviewed the account, and given the commission new proposals for different options. Maintenance will be set pricing, however, fertilizer will be added as a per application pricing. Organic is \$900-\$1,000, whereas regular fertilizer is \$500-\$600. Discussion was on how we would proceed with higher than \$1,000. David Landry asked if fertilizer is needed, and what if we remove fertilizer from application to save funds. Roberta agreed with removing fertilizer from the scope of the work for this area. All agreed that there should be more discussion on future spending for landscaping for this area, and will be added to the next agenda.
- 5) **Earth Day 2022:** Earth Day is April 23rd. A flyer will be sent out in the Bargain Buyer. A ¼ page ad is taken out by the Conservation Commission, while other commissions take out the same or larger ads in the Bargain Buyer, if approved. Also, in past years the Conservation Commission has purchased raffle prizes for participants, including Audubon gift certificates. As the Audubon Bookstore is no longer open, the Commission discussed purchasing local pollinator species of plants, trees, or shrubs to give away. The commission needs to come up with 3 raffles amongst ourselves for cutoff.

A motion was made to spend up to \$200 for funding an ad in the Bargain Buyer and to purchase raffle prizes.

(Motion made by Joe Pedro; seconded by Mike Lamoureux – passed unanimously)

On August 27th Project Zap is an additional clean up day.

- 6) Watershed Watch Program:** Request invoice from URI Cooperative Extension Program, which oversees this program. The Burrillville Conservation Commission provides funding for Spring Lake water monitoring between April and October. Samples of the water are taken each week and brought to URI for the town. The town has funded this program for many years, and included Pascoag Reservoir initially, until the Pascoag Reservoir Association took over monitoring of the Pascoag Reservoir water. The town continues to have the water at Spring Lake monitored. Rich has received the invoice and a motion for funding will be added to the next agenda.
- 7) RI Wildlife Action Plan 2025:** Bill Eccleston talked to Rich last meeting and how he was confused by the State calling it “Wildlife Action Plan” (WAP). WAP is a huge document, and we should consider changing the agenda name. The commission will now refer to this agenda item as “Town Conservation Plan” (CTP), rather than “Wildlife Action Plan.”

Ray Goff is interested in putting something together to start working on this plan for the town. Rich mentioned he would help ex-official to help continue his service. Our best contact for any information is through the DEM Wildlife Action Plan Liaison. Mike Lamoureux talked about experience with DEM and WAP, which is not as in-depth as they thought. We must come up with our own Conservation Town Plan and have it reviewed by the DEM team. Burrillville was considered ahead of the curve for having thoughts of creating their own CTP. There are not many previous examples to go by. Bill Eccleston mentioned Scott Millar from Grow Smart RI is the guy to consult for a CTP. Mike Lamoureux said we need to come to a meeting with a rough plan, where we will get help, but no start-up guidance. Bill E. recommended talking to Scott Millar, as he speaks planning. The commission discussed the idea of CTP and what it would help with in the future. If planning is already done in the present, then decisions can be made for funding quicker. Also, CTP helps give more support for future issues in planning or variances. Bill E talked in favor of CT as it helps give jurisdiction to the town over other species and plants. DEM only has jurisdiction over certain things. Having a predetermined plan will help all parties involved in future endeavors. CTP is an extra layer of protection for the town and conservation. Rich and Mike Lamoureux will need to figure out a meeting day with Ray. Roberta mentioned she is available for meeting as well.

- 8) Arbor Day:** Rich discussed planting Arbor Day trees over the years. Planted trees at Steere Farm Elementary School with the students, and was fun for all involved. The kids enjoyed the process of shoveling the dirt, being outside, and talking about “Tree Day”. The last time a tree was planted was with Rich, Joe, and Cam at Gonyea Park. There are a couple of places in town that can use trees. One is Remington Park in Mapleville and the other is the playground at the police station. Seedlings were planted there, but no immediate help for shade, so Rich suggested the commission consider the playground. Decent size trees are about a couple of hundred dollars. Someone will need to go to Central Nursery, pick out a tree, purchase it, and transport it.

A motion was made to appropriate up to \$250 for the purchase of a tree to be planted at a location to be determined.

(Motion made by Mike Lamoureux; seconded by Ron Lapierre – passed unanimously)

9) Family Fair: Andrea at Parks and Rec has confirmed that Family Fair will happen this year in June. Rich talked about past commissions purchasing pollinator plants from Roots and Shoots. Rich spoke with Maureen, and she said she would contact her suppliers to get \$1,200 - \$1,500 for plants to be given out at Family Fair. Prices are at cost plus transportation. We would pick them up, deliver them to the Family Fair, and give them out one per resident's household. Mike stated we could possibly have informational pamphlets on the table regarding the commission and what we do, and it is a good event for the Conservation Commission to meet and greet the public. An item will need to be added to the next agenda to appropriate funds.

10) Vacancy of Chairperson: Rich asked commission members to decide on a new Chairperson, and offered for anyone interested to come forward or make a recommendation, as well as recommending the Chairperson only take charge for 2-3 years. Joe Pedro declined offer, stating his time with the commission is coming to a close over the next couple of years. Ron mentioned he would accept if offered the position.

A motion was made for Ron Lapierre to take over the Chairperson position.
(Motion made by Mike Lamoureux; seconded by Joe Pedro – passed unanimously)

11) Mail: None

12) Adjournment: 8:15pm

(Motion made by Joe Pedro; seconded by David Landry – passed unanimously)