



TOWN OF PALMER CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Land Management Subcommittee

Meeting Minutes
Tuesday January 10, 2017 – 4:30 PM

Sarah Brodeur, Chair
Peter Izyk, Vice Chair
David Cotter
Donald Blais

Agent: Angela Panaccione

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Members Present: Sarah Brodeur, Donald Blais, Jr, Dave Cotter, Peter Izyk, Lisl Donaldson, Angela Panaccione (Agent)

Members Absent: All Present

Also Present: None

Meeting Opens: 4:45 PM – Sarah Brodeur (Chair)

Member Reports: Angela Panaccione reported she found two (2) bags of dead animal parts dumped at the second rest stop off Route 67. She called Dave Cotter, who relayed the message to MassDOT.

Review Mail/Phone Messages: None

Public Inquiries: None

Approval of Minutes: November 15, 2016

Motion made by Peter Izyk to approve the minutes from November 15, 2016, as corrected

Motion seconded by Donald Blais, Jr

No further discussion – vote taken: 4-0-1 (LD abstains)

New Business/Old Business

- Midura Conservation Land Expansion:** The overall goal for the Midura Area/Kings Brook Corridor is to secure an additional 500 acres to add to it, over the next five years. The objective is to protect Kings Brook in its entirety, from the headwaters above Rondeau Road to where it enters the Quaboag River off Boston Rd/MA-RT 67. Most of the headwaters area from Rondeau Road to Old Warren Road is currently protected by DFG as wildlife conservation area. The Commission owns a section south of Old Warren Road, until the Lizak property, the turnpike property and Kings Brook farm. The Commission will apply for a landscape partnership grant in 5 years and will seek to partner with Opacum Land Trust, DFG & DER. The other part of the plan is to upgrade the current culvert on Old Warren Road to meet the stream crossing standards and allow wildlife passage. Currently it is a significant barrier to wildlife migration and prohibits any acreage for acquisition north of the road due to the loss of connectivity of the habitat due to the crossing. Angela will contact Tim from DER to discuss upgrade to the culvert for wildlife passage. Additionally, the Commission will hold a BBQ for all abutters of Midura, on Saturday April 22, 2017 at 12pm, at the Midura Field to discuss the plans and see if any abutters are interested in either selling to the Commission or placing a CR on the property as part of the grant application.
- Swift River Boundary Marking:** This is on hold for the time being since none of the volunteers who expressed interest have been available for a work day. The Agent will try to coordinate a day and time that works for everyone.

3. Burleigh Park Community Forest: The process to designate an area as a Town Forest only requires a formal vote of the Town Council. The committee will work on preparing a request for the Town Council requesting the Town Forest Designation for the back of Burleigh Park.
4. Request to Amend Sale of Agricultural & Forestry Products Ordinance (Chapter 8, Article 1): No update, still waiting on Town Council Ordinance Subcommittee to schedule a meeting to review.
5. Contact/Hire Forester for Bacon Road Parcel: Sarah has reached out to Scott Gerrish about preparing a forest cutting plan for the Commission for the Bacon Road parcel. She will be lead contact on this. Gerrish requested additional information, such as the parcel id and any maps we have of the area.
6. Journal Press Release: The Palmer Journal ran the press release, supplied by Angela, in the December 15th paper. The article was well received and several individuals have expressed interest in joining the subcommittee.

Discuss Recreation Trails Grant: The currently proposed project for Palmer is an Accessible Trail that will provide access for people of all abilities to a peaceful forest experience with views of the Swift River. The grant funds requested for the project will include Trail Head construction of a parking area for handicapped vehicles & a kiosk, a ¼ mile ADA accessible loop trail (that can be developed more in the future as an “All Persons Trail”) with two resting/viewing areas along the trail with benches, and a terminus overlooking the River with benches and a handicapped accessible table.

Angela has received confirmation for SCA Assistance on the project. They have sent a letter of support and have agreed to two weeks (10 days total).

Angela discussed the information provided at the Trail Grant Workshop, held Thursday December 8, 2016 in Worcester. If DPW uses their own equipment for the parking lot construction it can be counted as part of the match.

Angela also met with abutter Mike Skownek on site to discuss his concerns about developing the area more. He is worried about 1) Dumping, 2) Canoe access and 3) Drug deals. Her response to the concerns was the grant will not be pursuing a canoe launch since the lower swift is shallow and hard to navigate with down trees and other storm damage and also there is no take-out point downstream before the confluence of the three rivers. Instead the project will be to develop trail head facilities (Parking, Kiosk, picnic area) and an accessible loop trail to the old foundations w/ an ADA accessible lookout (that can double as a fishing area as well).

The benefit of improving on the area and marketing it to the older, less mobile residents is they will use it more and it will self-police itself. There has been a significant reduction in illegal dumping there since the Commission started doing our bi-annual clean-up and publicizing them locally in the paper/on FB and on our website. Additionally, a specialized access gate will be places at the trailhead to allow wheelchair access, but no motorized vehicles (to prevent dumping).

Mike also expressed concerns that any proposed wooden structure would be “Set on Fire”. The Committee is taking this into consideration with the lookout-fishing area planning as Dave Cotter expressed a similar concern.

DER Grant for Field Data Collection for Culvert Replacement Design: To help towns replace culverts with better designed crossings, the Stream Continuity Program (SCP) is developing tools to help local road managers (i.e. Highway and Public Works Directors) carry out efficient and cost-effective field data collection, structure selection, design, permitting, and construction of replacement culverts. This grant opportunity will provide funding for selected municipalities to hire an experienced firm to perform the first step of a successful culvert replacement project (contractor qualifications must be accepted by DER) --field data collection--using SCP expert guidance and existing SCP scopes of work and data collection methods. Field data collection and comprehensive report for one culvert can usually be completed by an experienced firm in one to two months. The Field data collection will provide the information needed to complete an informed selection of a structure and the subsequent culvert or bridge design, geared toward meeting the goals of the Massachusetts Stream

Crossing Standards. Application of these standards to culvert design will improve habitat access for fish and wildlife and storm resiliency, and will reduce hazards to public safety caused by undersized and failing culverts.

The SCP is seeking to partner with two municipalities to begin two culvert replacement projects that will also serve as case study training sites for Highway/Public Works Departments from nearby towns. Our intention is to provide technical assistance to the selected municipalities for the duration of the culvert replacement process and to provide incentive grant funding when possible (e.g. this RFR for field data collection), while simultaneously developing cost effective tools for culvert replacements state-wide and conducting site-based trainings for Highway/Public Works Directors and staff from nearby communities. The funding is for the critical collection of field data for culvert replacement design (field data collection) for an undersized culvert located in an area of high value for fish and wildlife habitat and which replacement would benefit community and ecological storm resiliency. The Town of Palmer is very interested in gathering technical information and conducting the analyses necessary to engineer and design a road-stream crossing to meet the goals of the Massachusetts River and Stream Crossing Standards. No match is required.

The Agent is working on the grant application now, and DPW director will sign off and submit the application. It will be for the Kings Brook crossing on Old Warren Road. Sarah & Angela will be out in the field collecting data on the crossing using the NAACC protocols.

Dave Cotter mentioned someone hit a moose right around there a few years back and both Sarah & Angela have seen a large buck crossing the area this year. Angela has also recorded several dead wood turtles, as well as a dead fox and a few dead skunks. Needless to say, the area is a major corridor for wildlife migration and upgrading the currently undersized culvert will help.

Identify Other Action Items to work on:

1. Make invitation to Midura Cookout
2. ID areas for public education and outreach

Set Next Meeting Date: Monday January 30, 2017 at 4pm

Adjourn: 5:35pm

Motion made by Donald Blais, Jr to adjourn at 5:35 PM

Motion seconded by David Cotter

No further discussion – vote taken: 5-0-0 – Motion Carries