

Parks and Natural Resources Committee
Tuesday February 19, 2019 7:00 PM
Mansfield Town Hall Conference Room B

Minutes – FINAL

1. Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 6:59 PM

2. Roll Call

Attending: Jim Morrow (Chair), Ken Feathers (secretary), Tom Harrington, Sue Harrington, Julianna Barrett (alt.), and attending by conference call: Vicky Wetherell

Not present but on committee roster: Michael Soares, Quentin Kessel (Cons. Com. Rep.), Heidi Groeger (alt.)

Town Staff Present: Jennifer Kaufman

To achieve a quorum alternate Julianna Barrett was installed as a voting participant by the Chair.

3. Review of Minutes

The Minutes of the January 15, 2019 regular meeting were approved (moved S. Harrington, second T. Harrington)

4. Opportunity for Public comment

David Duffy was present as a guest to discuss trails on the Simpson Property, this continuing business topic was moved up in the agenda for convenience

- *Simpson Family Property*

Jim Morrow reported that he had provided members with a sketch map and trail notes. Several committee members had been able to get out to walk the proposed trail routes. Mr Duffy had also been able to follow the flagged route. The discussion focused mainly on potential rerouting to avoid wet areas. It was agreed that a field trip/group meeting on site would be needed to resolve the discussion, and one will be scheduled.

A tangent discussion topic was the need to evaluate hazard trees as a consideration in trail routing, due to recent gypsy moth and other insect tree mortality. The importance of doing this evaluation within the context of a forest management plan for the property was raised, and it was suggested that the forester who managed the last timber harvest be contacted for his long range vision/plan for the property as a starting point.

5. New Business

- *Boards and Committee Member Handbook*

Town Staff noted that this handbook should be read by all committee members, and we would be expected to assent to the ethics statement near the end of the document. It is available on the town web site and the electronic package included a link.

6. Continuing business

- *Simpson Family Property*

See update under "Opportunity for public comment".

- *Connecticut Bird Atlas*

Sue Harrington reported that work on the winter phase of the project is continuing. The count is weather dependent, although even a report of no birds is valid data. There is currently little food available for birds in the natural environment.

- *Outreach and Education*

The January tracking workshop was cancelled due to bad conditions (no snow) and low enrollment (only one person).

Upcoming opportunities include a Mother's Day walk and activity for Connecticut Trails Day. Both are scheduled for the pond loop at Bicentennial Pond.

Other upcoming opportunities are workshops on management of invasive plants (Charlotte Pyle and Brian Connely) and rain garden construction.

Town Staff reported that there was some erosion damage to the trail due to changes in water flow associated with high rain events and some regrading and reconfiguration will be needed before the walks. Feathers suggested posting a notice of the trail condition on the town web site, as the trail is not actually an accessible trail until repaired.

Sue Harrington raised the issue of low attendance for events where a fee is charged and thinks that the fee discourages participation and the town may need to make these free events to get better outreach potential.

7. Communications

Communications were noted as listed on the agenda.

Specific points made:

- The CLCC (Connecticut Land Conservation Council) photo contest is for pictures on lands that were preserved using specific open space funds. It may provide an opportunity to highlight our recreation lands. Morrow suggested we publish a list of eligible Mansfield parks and preserves in advance of next year's contest.
- Nipmuck trail relocation is to avoid a wet area between the historical society museum and 50 foot cliff. John Hankins is leading the CFPA effort for the blue blaze relocation, but the town is involved because it is on town preserve land.

8. Executive session in accordance with CGS section 1200(6)(D)

The committee entered executive session at 7:38 (moved S. Harrington, seconded Feathers)

The committee exited executive session at 8:25

Recommendations will be further edited by town staff and forwarded to the Town Manager.

9. Other

No discussion.

10. Future Agendas

The March meeting will have a presentation by the Dog Park Community Group to provide additional information for the MPNRC to prepare its recommendation.

There may also be a need to discuss town preserve use by riders of ATVs and fat-tire bikes.

11. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:31 PM (move Feathers; second T. Harrington)

Respectively Submitted

Ken Feathers, Secretary