

Richmond Conservation Commission

Minutes for 12 November 2019 meeting

Members of public present: Max Krieger, Wright Preston, Amy Ludwin (Bolton CC), Brad Elliott, Chuck Yenker

Commissioners: Judy Rosovsky, Bob Low, Jimmy Cochran, Elizabeth Wright, Caitlin Littlefield, Jimmy Cochran

Rick Barrett has resigned from the RCC. We regret his departure and thank him for his years of service to the town.

Approve minutes:

A motion to defer approval of November minutes was passed unanimously. Bob has amendments.

Invasives workshop: It was well advertised but only a few people turned up, including Chris Conant and someone from the state. Jon Kart and Jack worked well as a team on pulling, marking and cutting. The percent of trees with seeds was higher than any place else.

Jack asked Ethan Tapper to contact F&W for help with the buckthorn, but the F&W director of Facilities said they don't do anything with invasives. The RCC brainstormed possible sources of help for this work, including local schools service learning projects, the boy scouts, and possibly the master naturalists (MN). Ibit will ask Alicia (MN program head) who is managing the Richmond MN program. Caitlin pointed out that the state has action plans and that Federal funds may be available for public management plans; we can make some noise and possibly get help.

Small town forest: A motion to send the Selectboard (SB) a request to support matching conservation easements for the adjoining small town forests of Bolton and Richmond was made.

Discussion: Wright Preston gave an overview – two small adjacent parcels has been given to the towns of Richmond and Bolton; Richmond's is 30 acres and Bolton's is 12 acres. They are significant as they are surrounded by conserved land and have historic remnants on them. Ideally these will have matching conservation easements to facilitate management, and conserving them as forever wild will protect these undisturbed old farmsteads. The Cunningham family lived on them until about 1900.

The motion was approved unanimously. Wright will send the easements to the town attorney and then will bring them to the SB. The Richmond Land trust will hold the easements (if approved by the SB) and will apply for Conservation Reserve Funds (CRF) for a small amount of money for transaction and stewardship costs.

Further discussion: The current plan is to leave the area forever wild, though invasive species management may occur. How are invasives defined? Could put that in management plan. How about revenue from carbon credits? Would benefit landowner, i.e. the town. What about parking?

Conservation Reserve Fund Renewal: A motion to send a request to the SB to approve the CRF renewal and recommend that the CRF renewal be voted on by Australian ballot at the March 2020 Town Meeting.

Discussion: Each piece of property that the purchases have maintenance costs even if they are forever wild. The Long Trail across the street wasn't brushhogged. This takes time and energy, and committee's have time for pushing paper but not for management. Should have \$ to manage and need to set aside assets to maintain places. Could require that in a management plan.

The motion was approved 4 yay 1 nay.

CRF renewal presentation to SB review: Bob Low showed the RCC his potential 30 slide presentation to the SB, including a detailed historic review of the CRF and its expenditures. Bob requested feedback on what to use for examples, what concerns might arise ('crocodiles'), accuracy. Should the 20k for property purchase be changed? Pro's- accountability of expenditures; cons-in real estate transactions time is key and this can slow the transaction down.

It was pointed out that it costs the town money to conserve land and raises taxes; Bob noted that in the literature it is clear that this is not true – conserved land benefits the town and doesn't raise taxes. Bob requested that we delay this presentation till December, if possible, and he needs to know that ASAP.

Natural Resource Courses: JR will re-post blurb on Front Porch Forum (FPF). Please let JR know if you are interested in attending. The RCC town budget can be used to reimburse town officers who wish to attend.

Conservation Commission Composition: Max Krieger had seen town manager Josh Arneson's ad in FPF and has applied for an open spot on the RCC.

A motion was made to request that the SB decrease the number of seats on the Richmond Conservation Commission from the current 9 members to 7.

The motion was approved unanimously.