

**Minutes for Town of Pownal Conservation Commission Meeting
Tuesday, August 24, 2021, 7:00 pm, Mallett Hall**

Agenda

- 1. Members Present:** Matt Welch, Kathy Elders, Dick Hogue, Wellens King, Janet Lynch, Kate Day, Angela King, Pownal Selectman Jon Morris
- 2. Minutes** approved from meeting on May 25, 2021
- 3. Public comments:** none
- 4. New Business:**
 - Trails on town land
 - Committee members met and walked the Royal River area of the Sweetser, Chadsey loop, and agreed that it would be good to connect the trails, Fickett Road to Chadsey.
 - Dick said that Royal River has changed their plan and don't want to "upset the property", the Pisgah Hill Preserve wetlands.
 - Matt asked about the land that abuts the preserve, and Dick said that Pownal land does not abut the preserve, so the town can't help because it does not own the property to connect the parcels.
 - Matt mentioned the Allen and Sweetser Road connection, through the woodlot to get to the Pineland Corridor, and asked if the commission wants to do another exploratory walk on Sweetser, to see about a loop trail there.
 - Matt said that the land at Sweetser, 93 acres, was harvested in 2009 or 2010
 - Jon Morris said that there is a movement in New Gloucester to discuss an easement from the trail line to Pisgah Hill, so that creating a loop on Sweetser from Penny Road store, Pisgah Hill to Lawrence, Tryon and then back to West Pownal, Depot Road by Post office could move quickly.
 - Matt asked about setting a date to check out Sweetser Road; since the next Conservation Commission meeting is September 28th, commission members decided to do a walk on Sunday, September 26th, and to meet at 8:30am at Sweetser Road, right off Allen at the corner by the forest sign.
 - Matt said that Dick will be in touch with Royal River regarding the trail crew.
 - Jon asked if the Conservation Commission has talked about Elmwood Road land lot for trails; and he suggested the idea that the Conservation Commission connect all Pownal land with trails, and that the commission should create a

Master Plan, and think of ways to induce landowners to give easements to connect town land with trails.

– Jon also mentioned that the Select Board vision is for Pownal to be carbon neutral by 2030, and that everyone should have recreational opportunities.

– Matt said that the commission has walked the fine line of how to support town land use for hunters, mountain bikers, and opening it up for other users.

– Jon said that the land is a huge resource for the town residents, and that it has been used in the “traditional” way, which is that many people don’t even know it exists, and that it should be open for everyone; and that the collection of land and green space is no good if people don’t know it’s there.

– Angela mentioned that when people experience the public space of town owned land and trails, they will want the town to keep the land, versus residents who don’t use or know the land are more likely to vote to sell it.

– Kate Day asked about funding for trail maintenance.

– Jon said that there is federal funding, a huge grant pool, for formalized outdoor education and that the Pownal Elementary School is on board to make an outdoor education program, some 5th grade work outside; and that Pownal has great land stewards to help with this.

– Kate mentioned that perhaps Pownal should have a specific hunting park.

– Jon said that he liked the idea of natural fishing zones at brooks, and that the town could devise a town licensing fee for such an activity; he said that someone wants to build 15 tree houses by a brook for “glamping” because he thinks that the town has incredible natural infrastructure, and this would be a way to broaden use for kids and parents.

– Dick mentioned that in the past the Select Board did not want to develop trails; that he recently walked Leighton Road, that it is beautiful and has amazing Ash trees.

– Janet said that she is concerned about town land being a “secret”.

– Jon said that they are working with Royal River conservation to limit the number of people who use the trails, that on Lawrence Road there are sometimes 15 cars in the parking lot; that the town wants to step in and limit parking because it makes the trail experience more desirable when it isn’t so crowded; he said that the backside of Tryon Mountain is overused and that mountain bikes eroded trails, and that the Conservation Commission should make decisions on usage.

– Matt said that managing the land and trails will be Conservation Commission work.

– Jon mentioned how to balance conservation of land versus using it for common good.

- Dick said that a survey for the Leighton Road lot is being worked on, that the 13 acres are being contested right now.
- Angela asked how many more town lots need to be surveyed.
- Matt said that was a good question, that there are still lots to be done.
- Angela mentioned that when the commission first started the surveys, it was Sherry Dietrich's idea that the town should use impact fee money to pay for the surveys.
- Dick said that currently it is the money from foresting that is going towards the cost of town land surveys.
- Matt brought up how to walk the line of access to land versus over running the town land.
- Dick said that on Lawrence Road, near Tryon, there was no parking there, that the only way to get to Tryon was through the state park; and that it was the state park and Royal River that set up the parking lot; he said that parking areas could and should be limited, and that no parking on roads needs to be enforced.
- Dick mentioned all the beautiful trees in the Elmwood Road area – Hemlock and Birch trees; that Sherry Dietrich always kept watch on the large trees, and that Pownal had some of the largest species of trees.

5. Old Business:

- Pownal Town Land
 - Matt suggested that we put up more hunting signs once more trails are established.
 - Dick said that one can still hunt in many areas with trails, and that he has never heard of any problem with that.
 - Matt said that maybe we should get impact fee money for signage on hunting.
 - Matt said that John Mann is currently doing the survey on Map 4 Lot 20, and that is part of what we will walk on September 26th at 8:30am; he also said that we should park uphill from the lot because of the neighbor's little house on Allen.
 - Kate asked if anyone has talked to New Gloucester.
 - Matt said that he will find out if they have a conservation committee.
 - Janet said that across from Sweetser is a good passage on the New Gloucester side.
 - Dick said that Royal River has land on the Fickett Road side for conservation.
 - Janet said that an avid hunter in New Gloucester is chair of the Royal River Conservation Trust.

- Matt said that he will gather more info, that there is a possible sale of Map 8 Lot 9, but that the Select Board is not into selling the land.
- Dick said that it is currently land-locked property, that the Leighton Road trail goes onto the North Yarmouth line; that there is a house already built and the owner wants to buy the contentious lot, Map 8 Lot 9.
- Janet wants to look at the North Yarmouth side that abuts Lot 9.

- Hodsdon Mill Site

- Matt said that the town has proposed to pave the first 75 feet of the private dirt road by the river to get some parking spots; and that the homeowner association is reviewing the proposal.
- Dick said that he thought it was already accepted, and that now lawyers are reviewing the proposal, and that the town will have to plow and maintain the roadway section that they pave.
- Matt said that this is a step closer to the loop trail.
- Dick said that we'll need a trail crew to map out a trail network system.

- CMP Transfer Station

- Matt said that the solar project is moving forward along the powerlines, and that the planning board is looking at amending it so that the panels are not as close to the abutter, Doug Stewarts, property.

- New Gloucester

- Wellens looked up what kind of committees the town has, and said that there is a New Gloucester Environmental resources Committee that meets the first Thursday of every month.
- Matt said that he will contact them and that maybe one or two of us from the conservation commission could go to one of their meetings; and that Jon had a good point, how to make the request to connect trails without alienating the town.
- Dick said that the trail off the woodlot is popular, easy to maintain, and connects to the Pineland corridor, but that parking might be an issue.
- Matt said that Royal River wanted to put that on their map in 2014 and it was rejected by the Select Board; that they wanted to add Elmwood Trail to the Royal River map; now the Select Board would be on-board for both.

- Kate said that the Conservation Commission should have a mission statement, communicate that we want to preserve land for hunters, snowmobilers, everyone.
- Matt agreed, that the commission should be inclusive, and that such a document should be mailed to residents because not everyone comes to town meetings; that it would be good to get that communication out before hunting season.
- Kate said that she would start a draft mission statement.

6. Correspondence: none

7. Other topics: none

8. Meeting adjourned at 8:30pm.