

Town of Pownal Conservation Commission (PCC) Meeting Minutes
Tuesday May 28 , 2024
6:30 pm, Mallett Hall

The meeting was called to order at 6:45 by Matt Welch and the following committee members were in attendance: Dick Hogue, Bob VanMilligan, Janet Lynch, Kathy Elders and Wellens King. Alan Stearns with Royal River Conservation Trust (RRCT) was also present.

The minutes from the April meeting were approved as written.

Royal River Conservation Trust- Alan started the discussion by asking if any members were aware of any problems associated with the upcoming proposed conservation easement on the Elmwood Road woodlot. He wondered whether there might be some debate on the issue, and asked the committee members if we were expecting the warrant to pass at town meeting. Alan says that he will email his thoughts and send them to his contacts in Pownal, as well as to the members of the PCC. He suggested that we might send it out to friends and neighbors as well. Matt added that anyone he has talked to has mentioned that the Elmwood lot is not suitable for town use, so he doesn't expect that to be one of the points of contention brought up at town meeting.

Alan mentioned that RRCT will be meeting with the selectboard next week about a proposed parking lot on Elmwood across the street from the town lot (to serve an existing easement held by RRCT).

Alan asked what the PCC's timeline is for getting easements on Poland Range and Sweetser lots. Matt mentioned that the Town Planner is getting assessments this year on all town properties, so we would want to wait until after those are done before exploring further easements, and that we will have to keep a close eye on how the Elmwood land is used if the proposed easement passes.

Dick mentioned that in his opinion, he would like to see an easement first on Sweetser because of the risk of losing precious wildlife habitat. Dick spoke with John Mann about posting the survey for Poland Range Rd. lots, map 2, lots 27&28, on the state registry.

Alan mentioned that there seems to be some reluctance on behalf of the selectboard because of some question of litigation against the town.

Alan reiterated that this is the PCC's proposal, but that he is happy to help with presenting and/ or fielding questions at the town meeting. He did state that he thinks it is important for members of the PCC to be prepared to speak on behalf of the proposal as well.

Alan inquired about the PCC's official list of duties, Dick presented one and Wellens mentioned that PCC's duties can be referenced on the town website.

Dick asked about a road crossing on Elmwood from the proposed parking area to the opposite side of Elmwood.

Alan mentioned that it is up to the town as to whether or not the existing woodlot parking area should be open or gated, and perhaps opened during hunting season. Alan suggested that the town might want to appoint an individual to monitor the gate if one is used. Alan and Matt discussed that the road commissioner should be notified before town meeting that the Elmwood Rd lot should no longer be used as a ditching area once the easement passes. Janet and Bob stated that they would talk about the risks of not getting easements on town lands, and that it will help keep town properties as they are.

Browntail moth recap: Dick was able to work with Top Leaf Tree, who successfully applied organic treatment to multiple town owned land sites. The grant for next year is on the books for the next selectboard meeting. Bob mentioned that he received positive feedback about the Browntail Moth Clipping Day in early April.

Town meeting: June 17, 7pm at Pownal Elementary School. Matt encouraged all to attend the meeting if possible. PCC's next meeting is June 25, 6:30pm. Matt suggested that we might consider taking the month of July off. He also suggested that we keep an eye on the Elmwood Rd. lot over the summer if the conservation easement passes. There was some question of how RRCT will publicize the Elmwood Road Easement on their website.

Poland Range Road Walk: Those in attendance for the walk stated that it went well. It was mentioned that the topography of this parcel makes it very unlikely to be suitable for use by the town and/ or as a building site.

Matt thanked those in attendance, the meeting adjourned at 7:45 pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Wellens King.