



TOWN OF WAKEFIELD

CONSERVATION COMMISSION

ConservationCommission@wakefield.ma.us

Minutes – 2/20/2024

Attendance: Chairman Jim Luciani; Bob Romano; Peter Miller; Ken Alepidis; Teresa Belmonte; Haley McHatton-Ballou; Paul Wendelgass

Agent: Elaine Vreeland

2/6//24 minutes – Ms. Belmonte made a motion to approve with edits the 2/6/24 minutes.

Mr. Wendelgass made a second to the motion. After polling the Commissioners individually, the motion passed. Mr. Luciani and Ms. McHatton-Ballou were not present for the vote.

DEP#313-631 – 94 Butler Avenue – Town of Wakefield – this matter was continued to 3/19/24 at the applicant's request.

Open Space and Recreation Plan – discussion – A draft plan was submitted for review and comment.

The Commission concurred that the document is well written and provides a comprehensive overview of the Town's future needs.

Mr. Miller would like to see the addition of a statement regarding the sale of Town owned open space. With ever decreasing open space, he felt that there should be a compelling reason for a sale. Retention of open space should be paramount.

23 Montrose Avenue – tree removal request. Photographs and letter from an arborist with Keith's Tree were provided for review.

The Commission agreed that the tree could be removed without mitigation as it is 30' from the wetland resource, leans toward the house and is suffering from rot at the base. A letter noting approval will be issued to the homeowner.

Long term goals – The Commission will review the tax title list and formalize a request to Town Council for transfer of appropriate properties to the care and custody of the Commission. Additionally, signage at trailheads and conservation area entry points are priority projects.

Fiscal year 2025 budget – Ms. Belmonte will draft a letter requesting an increase of the Conservation Agent's hours from 19 to 30 per week for placement on the 4/29/24 Town Meeting Warrant. She will also reach out to Town Counsel Tom Mullen.

Finance Committee – Ms. Belmonte has forwarded to the Finance Committee a comprehensive list of the Conservation Agent's (Agent) duties.



Ms. Vreeland suggested providing them with the newly developed Agent job description as well.

Mr. Alepidis felt that tasks could be group together based on whether they are industrial or single-family review.

Mr. Miller noted that site review following permit approval is largely overlooked due to a lack of full-time hours.

Draft Conservation Agent job description – The Commission felt that this was comprehensive. They agreed that wording should be changed to read that the Agent would work with, not under the Economic Development Director. Also, the requirement that an applicant have knowledge of EPA regulations could be removed. They expressed concern and skepticism that all tasks could be performed within part-time hours.

Bronwyn DellaVolpe – Cyrus Street – stated that other Towns with lower populations have full-time Conservation Agents.

Ms. Vreeland felt that the posting should be held until after April Town Meeting in case the position is increased to full-time hours.

Appointments – The Commission will submit a letter of support to Town Council endorsing applicant Eleanor Axelrod.

In-person meetings – Ms. Vreeland stated that hybrid meetings may be beginning by the end of March 2024.

Voke appeal update – A hearing date has been scheduled for 5/9/24 regarding amended issues for adjudication. This is a public meeting.

Mr. Miller made a motion to adjourn.

Ms. Belmonte made a second to the motion. After polling the Commissioners individually, the motion passed unanimously.