



NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION
REMOTE ONLINE MEETING MINUTES

April 7, 2022 - 7 PM

Approved 4-28-2022

Present: Jay McHale, Chair; Laura Robert, Vice Chair; Allison Burson; Bea Bezmalinovic, Secretary, Lisa Collins; Brandon Schmitt, Director

Guests: Richard Howell, Denny Nackoney, Cliff Canaday, Al Ferrer, Jeanne Mayell, Jaden Crawford, Martha Collins, Judith Barr, Jo Okun.

Liaison Reports:

- **New Liaison needed:** NRC Director Brandon Schmitt asked for a new liaison for the 3R Working Group. Ms. Burson volunteered to be the new liaison.
- **Wetlands Protection:** Mr. McHale introduced the Wetlands Protection Committee chair Richard Howell. Mr. Howell is leaving the Wetlands and Ellie McLane will step into the Chair role. The Wetlands Committee currently has two associates, and one will become a regular Commission member upon Mr. Howell's departure. Mr. Howell's second discussion item was to update the NRC on two properties fined recently by the Wetlands Commission for damage to wetlands. Mr. Howell emphasized the importance of raising awareness of fines issued, alert others about to avoid violations, and increase the understanding of the value of wetlands and their environmental importance. The NRC and Wetlands will coordinate on outreach and news updates. Ms. Bezmalinovic brought up the fact that the NRC and Wetlands have a different fine for tree removal.
- **Trails:** Denny Nackoney, chair of the Trails Committee, asked for approval for a new trail that was released in the new five-year plan. The new trail, the Hundreds Trail, is an interconnecting trail in the northern neighborhoods of Wellesley. The trail starts at Brown Park and will run through Ledgeways, White Oak Roads, Carisbrooke reservation and loops around to the Weston Trails network. The trail length is 1 1/3 miles through scenic areas and low traffic roads. The Trails Committee is looking for approval by the NRC and the condominium association as well as residents, industrial and DPW. The NRC commissioners support the plan, assuming that there is no objection from residents.
- **Other updates:** Two organizations in Lexington, the Lexington Tree Committee and Lexington Living Landscapes, invited tree conservation groups to an introductory meeting. Ms. Bezmalinovic participated in the meeting with 13 other cities and towns on best practices to improve education and preserving the tree canopy. Mr. Schmitt asked if the NRC commissioners would be interested in signing a letter in support of updates to the Public Shade Tree law. The State of Massachusetts's general laws on Public Shade Trees that protects trees within the right of way and was last updated in 1913. There is an effort to bring the rule up to date. For example, the law currently does not provide for penalties for damage done to trees by cars. Other changes include updating the fines to damaged trees and adding scientific practices that were not present in 1913. The commission agrees to have Mr. Schmitt draft a letter supporting the updating of the Tree Canopy rule and signing it on behalf of the Wellesley NRC. Ms. Bezmalinovic said the next meeting of the multi-town tree coordinating group is April 26, 7-8:30 p.m. to share different practices in participating towns and cities. Ms. Bezmalinovic, Mr. Schmitt and Ms. Robert will coordinate participation at these meetings.
- Mr. McHale thanked advisory liaison Al Ferrer and his colleagues on the Advisory committee for their support and approval of the NRC proposals that were before the Town Meeting. Mr. McHale also thanked the CPC for their support.

Public Speak: Martha Collins

- Mr. McHale apologized for skipping a public speak resident on a non-agenda item. He then read the rules to public speak and introduced Ms. Martha Collins. Ms. Collins spoke about the upcoming light replacement project on the Hunnewell multipurpose fields and tennis courts. In addition to asking for information about reducing light spill, Ms. Collins asked that lights include a timer, that Town staff responsible for turning on and off the lights be posted on the Town website, that there be adjustments to the trash management, transparency about which team is using fields, and neighborhood engagement in the planning process. She also said she will send her recommendations to the board.

7:45 p.m. – Hunnewell Track & Field Proposal Update – Mr. McHale has allowed Mr. Schmitt to allow public speakers on the subject.

- **Judith Barr read a statement from Joan Gaughan** - She asked the NRC to move cautiously in voting on the proposal and suggested the NRC wait to decide on lights until field optimization study is ready.
- **Cliff Canady** – spoke about the current sound level in the area and the possibility of increased sound with lights. He encourages the NRC to reject the current plan.
- **Jeanne Mayell** – following Mr. Canady’s noise issue. Ms. Mayell talked about proper sleep and the effects of lack of sleep. The noise levels will effect this for those neighbors to this project. She shared two videos with sound of the current sound level and when an event takes place. Ms. Mayell asked the NRC to as if they lived in the area.
- **Jaden Crawford** – spoke about the advice the NRC has been given by one of the Town’s lawyers and the negative precedent associated with not following existing guidelines. He suggests that ignoring the policy will strip the protection of property for neighbors. Mr. Crawford asks the NRC Commission members to vote to protect the people in the area of the current plan.
- **Josephine Okun** – suggested that NRC avoid hasty conclusions about biodiversity effects based on the Epsilon findings. She also recommended that the proposed noise policy reflect the ZBA’s suggested sound level of 50 DBA for non-daytime sound. She also asked for a sound policy that stops sound after 7:00 pm.
- **Martha Collins** –mentioned that BC Soccer Field in Newton only allows for the use of sound for athletes’ introductions and the National Anthem.
- **Mr. McHale** said the School Committee will come back to the NRC will a new proposal tentatively on April 25 on this Hunnewell Track & Field project.

Climate Emergency – Ms. Robert brought up the fact that Boston will be adding 20 electrical school buses to their fleet. She reached out to the Concord Superintendent of Schools and they have added two electrical buses with another bus to be added in the fall. Ms. Robert also called the Concord Transportation manager on how they charge the buses who explained that because of the charging technology they are proceeded slowly with electrical buses. Mr. McHale added to set up a meeting with the Climate Action Committee to combine what the NRC is doing with the Climate plan. Ms. Bezmalinovic noticed the – No Idling – signs have been placed outside Wellesley schools to encourage residents to turn off their engines while parked.

Sound Policy Review –

Mr. McHale would like to work with the School Committee to come up with a consistent sound policy for NRC and School fields. Ms. Collins and Ms. Robert both volunteered to be involved. Mr. Schmitt requested clear direction on what is allowed and not allowed on the sound issue. Mr. McHale clarified that he would like to see a sound policy that can be consistently applied across fields in town. Ms. Burson asked who would be involved and Mr. McHale explained that he would like to start with the two landowners, the NRC and Schools. Ms. Burson mentioned the current sound policy requires no amplification after 7 p.m. Ms. Robert asked if schools has a sound policy on the fields. She would like to be involved and hoping to minimize sound and meet more needs. Mr. Schmitt said there is not uniform policy on sound at fields. Ms. Bezmalinovic brought up the fact that Reidy Field the sound policy is a 9 p.m. shutoff. She did say there needs to be a more consistent across the board between the NRC and Schools. Ms. Collins also agreed about consistency is important. She suggested to look at the NRC policy across fields and then collaborate with Schools for a more consistent policy. Mr. McHale thanks Ms. Collins and Ms. Robert on volunteering to take on this project.

Director's Report:

- **Tree Canopy Assessment Software** – Mr. Schmitt talked about PlanItGeo, a GIS service that facilitates tree canopy assessment and tree census. The Town currently has public shade [tree census data available on the town website](#). Mr. Schmitt presented features of PlanItGeo that show changes in the tree canopy coverage in Wellesley over time. Mr. McHale requested a written proposal of how the NRC would use PlanItGeo to benefit the town. Ms. Collins asked that the proposal include any risks or concerns, especially associated with privacy considerations. Ms. Bezmalinovic would be happy to see this advance. Mr. McHale suggested including IT. Mr. Schmitt mentioned that he had talked to CPC about funding for this initiative in the past. Mr. Schmitt will also draft a short review of the benefits of the program.
- **Charles River Watershed Flood Mapping/Action Grant** – **When** the CRWA adjusted their selection criteria, Wellesley's Kelly Field site, which had ranked at top previously, was not as highly ranked. Mr. Schmitt will continue to track this opportunity. In the interim, the NRC may need to consider options for the tennis courts near Kelly Field.
- **Field Utilization Studies** – The PFTF expressed consensus interest in moving forward with Weston and Sampson. The project launch is pending Town Meeting approval of the funding allocation.
- **Lawn Conversion Project** – CPC funding for this will not be available until July. The MVP grant process is both time-consuming and not well aligned with the project goals at this point. The NRC is currently looking for funding options. Mr. Schmitt said that site and vendor selection will be finalized soon.
- **No-Mow May** – Ms. Bezmalinovic explained that No Mow May encourages residents to delay mowing to support food sources for pollinators during the early spring. The DPW will not mow a section of Simons Park for a few weeks to create a demonstration site. Ms. Collins suggest doing a comparison to opt to mow another property to mow and show the differences and level of activity. Ms. Bezmalinovic agrees with the idea and referenced a university study in Wisconsin that found a measurable difference in the amount of bees and the number of bee species. Ms. Collins thinks is we show the measurable difference it will change peoples' regular behavior. Ms. Robert encouraged residents if they are going to be involved in the "No-Mow May" program to email the NRC (nrcmembers@wellesleyma.gov). Mr. Schmitt also suggested using the Citizen Scientist program as a way to collect the data. Mr. McHale agreed with Ms. Robert about maybe publicizing participation similar to the pesticide free map. Ms. Bezmalinovic suggested printing out the signs for No-Mow May from Plant Life (<https://www.plantlife.org.uk/uk>) in the UK or Bee Ecology (<https://www.beecological.co.uk/>) have signs you can print out and put on your lawn.

- **Open Space and Recreation Plan** – Mr. Schmitt updated the committee on the status of the draft OSRP. Mr. Schmitt asks the NRC members to read through the OSRP again. They will need a letter of review from the Select Board, Planning Board and the regional planning agency. Mr. Schmitt is looking for the NRC member’s feedback before the OSRP is sent to the State. He suggested looking at Section 9 and asked for feedback. Mr. McHale asked for a deadline for them to review it. Mr. Schmitt asked for reviews by Friday, April 22.
- **Discuss co-sponsor opportunities** – Middle School parents and the Police Department wanted to know if the NRC would like to co-sponsor an upcoming Bike Safety ride through Fuller Brook Park. Ms. Burson said it’s a great sponsorship opportunity. The NRC commissioners all agreed.
- **Permits** –
 - **Wellesley Rocks** – local musicians who are part of Wellesley Rocks requested a permit to play in Central Park from Noon-3 p.m. one Saturday a month starting in May. NRC Commissioners unanimously agreed to support this permit request.
 - **Julie Fund Dog Jog** - the NRC discussed a request to for the Julie Fund to host a four-hour event with vendors with dog services and a mile loop around Morses pond. The proposed event would be open to the public with suggested donations. Ms. Robert asked about if they were selling items. Ms. Bezmalinovic asked about the estimated number of participants and expressed concern if there were many people jogging around Morses Pond, which might be problematic for residents and for the trails. Ms. Collins attended the Yoga fundraiser. She brought up the fact of asking about volunteers which increases the numbers. Ms. Burson asked about having big dog events around a watershed area. Ms. Bezmalinovic asked about the trails and can the trails accommodate the numbers. Mr. Schmitt will follow up on these questions and provide an update.
- **Bench Location for Thomas Zinck** – The NRC received a request to accept a gift of a bench in honor of Thomas Zinck. Members raised question about the location given existing paths and traffic. Ms. Collins and Mr. Schmitt will work with the donors and consider other options, including another site or tree instead of a bench.
- **Board Calendar Review** – Mr. McHale would like a concise annual schedule and follow up on the decisions being made. He asked the NRC members to look at the proposed calendar and add any suggestions.

Future Meetings – The NRC agreed to shift their regular meeting from April 21st to April 28, 2022 because of the planned school vacation. The DPW provided four trees for consideration of removal at the next meeting. Ms. Bezmalinovic suggests to review the standard tree risk assessment guidelines for those who are not familiar with tree assessment. Mr. Schmitt will compile the criteria for April 28. Ms. Burson suggest the board looks at the tree on (275 Walnut) before we vote. She said the roots make the sidewalk is impacting on the walkway.

Approve Minutes:

After a motion was made and seconded, the board approved the meeting minutes for Feb. 17, 2022 and March 6, 2022 with a 5-0 vote.

Schedule Future Meetings: The Board agreed to cancel their 4/21/2022 meeting due to anticipated absences. The next meeting is scheduled to take place on 4/28/2022.

Urgent Items Not Anticipated Prior to 48-hours of Posting: N/A

Adjourn:

The meeting adjourned at 9:37 PM.