

**NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION**  
**REMOTE ONLINE MEETING MINUTES**

**Thursday, September 1, 2022**

Approved 9/15/2022

**Present:** Jay McHale, Chair; Laura Robert, Vice-Chair; Bea Bezmalinovic, Secretary; Allison Burson and Brandon Schmitt, NRC Director

**Guests:**

**Not Present:** Lisa Collins

**Welcome & Meeting Guidelines**

**Public Speak**

No residents present for public speak.

**New & Continuing Business**

- Mr. McHale opened the meeting asking Ms. Burson about mobility updates. Ms. Burson will indicate if there are specific mobility topics to be covered at the retreat. Ms. Robert has reached out to Trails about potential topics for inclusion at the NRC retreat. The group discussed possible NRC website updates and an agreed time for the upcoming retreat on Tuesday, Sept. 13<sup>th</sup> at the NRC's new office space at 888 Worcester St.
- Ms. Bezmalinovic shared a draft file that aims to integrate objectives and activities from different public documents into one file. The NRC expressed support for having this type of document at the retreat in whatever format seemed most suitable to Mr. Schmitt. Sources of information for this plan are Open Space Plan, Municipal Vulnerability Plan (MVP) and the Climate Action Implementation. The NRC board may use this document to high light priorities and identify gaps. Mr. McHale would also like to populate an annual calendar to create a plan of action for upcoming meetings.

**Liaison Reports**

- **Trails:** Ms. Robert announced that the next Trails meeting is September 7<sup>th</sup>. She thanked Needham Scouts and parents for the beautiful new bog bridge at Boulder Brook.
- **Playing Fields Task Force:** Ms. Bezmalinovic reported the next meeting is on Friday, Sept. 9.
- **Mobility:** Ms. Burson reported that the Select Board has funding to develop a new holistic plan to include safe routes to town, including low stress routes to schools.
- **CPC:** Mr. McHale added that the CPC has not met and the meeting is upcoming this month.

**Climate Emergency**

- Ms. Robert mentioned how she has been doing the little things to save water in this drought - like using dishwater and old dog bowl water for the plants. The discussion continued about the extreme drought in Massachusetts and the use of grey water to water shrubs and bushes.

**Directors Report**

- **Aqueduct Bathroom Update:** Mr. Schmitt announced the bathroom passed inspection. The bathroom doors will be open to the public from 6:30 a.m.-9:30 p.m.

- **Tree Health Update:** Mr. Schmitt talked about tree status in the midst of the current drought conditions. Mr. Schmitt shared slides on how a drought stresses trees. He touched upon the impact on the trees with little water as well as recommendations on tree care during the current drought. The general recommendation is to provide 10 gallons of water per inch of trunk diameter every 14 days. Measure the circumference at chest height and divide by 3 to approximate the diameter. Another way to calculate the watering requirements is the tree diameter x 2 minutes to estimate total watering time.

- **Pond Update:** Mr. Schmitt reported that the NRC has received calls about the blue-green algae at Morses Pond and Bezanson Pond. Mr. Schmitt shared that the NRC does not recommend residents let their dogs swim in those areas. Ken Wagner confirmed that there is Planktothrix, a blue green algae that does produce toxins. Mr. Wagner did not find any concentration in the swimming area at Morses Pond but there are algae blooms northeast of the boat launch. The Director recommended that visitors to Morses Pond use extra caution in those areas. Mr. Schmitt reported that Mr. Wagner will conduct sampling at all the ponds and evaluate. If there is rain, the rain will help flush out the algae. In terms of other ponds, the NRC will assess Reed Pond and Duck Pond for sedimentation. Mr. Wagner will be looking at the depth of sediment to provide guidance on the type of permit required and the cost requirements. He will look at Ice Pond, but the general thought is that there is acceptable water quality at Ice Pond. The pond would benefit from harvesting there, but that is more difficult. There will not be a full report in time for the NRC Retreat but possibly October or November. The director also recommended that residents not fertilize or apply pesticides to lawns in drought conditions. Given the drought, this application would not be beneficial for the lawns and the chemical run-off exacerbates the water issues at the ponds.

- **Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP):** Mr. Schmitt said the Select Board received a grant to conduct an HMP. Select Board has a consultant to lead the HMP and the NRC staff will be part of the planning committee. There will be public meetings, currently scheduled for October and March, with hopes to have a plan by March 2023. There will be more information forthcoming for public participation. Mr. Schmitt explained that an HMP looks at long term strategies to reduce loss from disasters (natural disasters, public safety is involved, flooding as well as communication lines with public safety, as well as forest fires). Ms. Robert asked if well heads are included in the plan and Mr. Schmitt will check on that.

- **Plan Gas Leak Update Permits:** Wayne Everett, a volunteer, took over 645 individual tests to over 225 sites throughout town that were listed on the [gas HEET map](#). Mr. Schmitt shared the gas leaks map and showed where the gas leaks are located. He explained Utilities are required to report leaks. Leaks are identified by customers who call in so leaks are associated with the caller's address, not necessarily where the leak is located. Bob Ackley was hired confirm the sites and that data is on the Town of Wellesley's website. Category 1 Leaks are hazardous and require urgent action. Category 2 leaks need to be fixed within a year. Category 3 leaks are those that are not hazardous and not anticipated to become hazardous. Category 3 leaks can still be emitting significant amount of gas but are not slated for repair. There is legislation pending to reclassify category three for quicker repair, an important emissions mitigation step. Currently even as category 1 leaks are repaired, new leaks are being identified. Our interest is the leaks in relation to trees. Mr. Everett found that 73 of the 225 sites did have gas, and seven of those had recent tree removals. It is hard to establish a causal link between the leaks and the tree failure. However, the

NRC is exploring recovery of replanting costs or compensation from the utility. New data is expected to come out in March – which leaks have been fixed and which ones are still there.

- **Permits:** Mr. Schmitt issued permits for the Hunnewell School ice cream social on the Town Hall Green since the school is under construction. Another annual permit will be given to Bates Pumpkin Festival at Kelly Field in conjunction with Recreation. A third permit has been requested by a high school tennis group would to use the Hunnewell courts for one hour per week and NRC is coordinating with Recreation.

- Mr. McHale added an update on the **pesticide legislation** that the NRC was requested to oppose. Mr. McHale reported that per govwatch.com there is a two percent chance of this advancing. He suggested to wait to see the outcome of the election and then reach back out to Representative Jake Auchincloss' office to get an update on the legislation.

- Mr. Schmitt also added that a representative from the [Charles River Watershed Association](http://www.crwa.org) (www.crwa.org) would like to present to the NRC about the dam removal. They are focusing on the Watertown dam but could provide feedback on the one in Natick.

- **Field Utilization Study:** It continues to move forward and will work on the public survey to be distributed in the next few weeks.

#### **Approved Minutes**

- The NRC edited the minutes for 8/04/2022 and approved the minutes, 4-0.

- The NRC edited the minutes for 8/18/2022 and approved the minutes, 4-0.

#### **Urgent Items Not Anticipated Prior to 48-hour of Posting**

- None.

#### **Adjourn:**

- The meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

#### **Attachments:**

Add Tree Slides to minutes