

WASON POND CONSERVATION & RECREATION COMMISSION
May 5, 2020
Virtual Meeting
Approved Minutes

For or the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Wason Pond Conservation and Recreation Commission will be meeting via Zoom teleconferencing on the first Tuesday of the month. If you would like to participate in the Zoom teleconference, please contact Recreation at (603) 235-8255 or e-mail director@chesternhrec.org.

Present were:

Chris Hadik
Corinna Reishus
Kristina Snyder, Conservation Rep.
Kathleen Neff Ragsdale, Conservation Rep.
Leslie Hammond, Recreation Rep.
Darrell Quinn, Alternate
John Dalrymple, Alternate
Chairman Chuck Myette, Selectman Liaison
Selectman Steph Landau

Absent were:

Staff Present:

Park Ranger John Wright

1. Open Meeting-New Business

Chair Hadik called the meeting to order at 7:04 PM.

a. Treasurer's Report

Mrs. Neff Ragsdale noted two expenditures totaling \$62 leaving a balance of \$891.68.

Mrs. Reishus motioned to accept the Treasurer's Report, as stated. Mr. Quinn seconded the Motion. A roll call vote was taken, with all in favor, so moved.

b. Approval of March 2, 2020 Minutes

Ms. Hammond motioned to approve the March 2, 2020 minutes. Mr. Quinn seconded the Motion. A roll vote was taken, Ms. Hammond and Mrs. Ragsdale abstained, motion approved 5-0-2.

c. Open Position – Member at Large

Mr. Hadik noted that Sandy Wright was interested in the open position and to end an email.

2. Selectmen's Liaison

a. Selectmens' decision to close parking area

Selectman Myette indicated there was a lot of discussion, complaints and enforcement issues. Traffic was increasing, illegal substances and a lack of social distancing. The Selectmen felt that keeping the trails open but stopping parking would deter people from coming. Selectman Myette noted he abstained from that vote. It was accepted until June 15th unless other circumstances come up. The Selectmen have been discussing an ordinance for awhile and the Commission came up with a priority system, reviewed options and the Selectmen wanted a solution and to make a plan. Some people don't want to go anymore and have complained. COVID-19 helped push that decision together with the closure of other local parks such as Pawtuckaway in response to the pandemic. The next step is to see how the parking gets opened and how we manage going forward. Mrs. Neff Ragsdale noted she was not sure she wanted that decision rescinded.

Ms. Hammond and Mrs. Neff Ragsdale noted they were concerned to find out about the decision on social media. Mr. Quinn noted the Commission was informed and involved in the decision to close the playground but not this. Recreation made the decision to close the fields. Mr. Dalrymple noted despite maintenance putting signs up there was still activity.

Ms. Hammond recommended closing half the spaces. Selectman Myette recommended the Board write down any other recommendations they have. The Board would need to contact town counsel concerning resident only parking.

b. Response to non-recommendation of parking permits

Selectman Myette noted parking permits were discussed as well as security cameras.

Mr. Hadik noted the Commission did not want to charge Chester residents.

Selectman Myette noted events could be an exception. The BOS was in favor of permits and discuss an ordinance related to permits at its last meeting. Mrs. Reishus noted she had a letter in 2016 from town counsel saying they didn't recommend permits. Selectman Myette asked how resident spots could be managed? Mr. Hadik noted resident stickers would not fix the crowding issue. Selectman Myette noted some parks close as they hit capacity. Mr. Hadik indicated that would bring back to the issue of an attendant or a gate that could be automated. Each solution presents additional problems. Selectman Myette noted the permits seem to be the least invasive solution.

Mr. Quinn indicated he was in favor of the resident sticker for Wason Pond and the Transfer Station and asked how the cost could be offset? Legal would need to advise about the cost comparison. Mrs. Reishus noted the fees could not exceed a 2% ratio. Fees could be comparable with what other sites charge for non-residents. Mrs. Hammond noted she had no problem with permits with certain exceptions but did not want to eliminate the use. Mrs. Reishus noted charging a fee may cause the Town to lose its recreational immunity.

Selectman Landau indicated there is a tremendous amount of misinformation. These discussions started two years ago. Not sure the exact solution with insurance. Selectman Landau indicated he made the motion to close parking temporarily, partly because of COVID-19, partly because of the campground closing. The Town is not trying to stop people from going there. This discussion comes up over and over and we need to do something and decide where we're going. That is why the middle of June was chosen to give the Commission time to discuss other options.

Mr. Hadik noted he was in favor of cameras which are deterrents. Ms. Hammond noted the pandemic

reduced our options. Ms. Hammond suggested the other open trails should be publicized more.

c. Ordinances?

Selectman Myette noted an ordinance was drafted about a year ago. In order to enforce parking, you need an ordinance. The attorneys drafted the ordinance which enforces illegal parking with fines. Mr. Hadik would like to review it. Selectman Landau recommended emailing the Town Administrator and she would provide it to you.

3. Recreation Commission

a. Events-

i. Summer Program (7/6/20-8/14/20)

ii. Others

Mrs. Reishus noted the Fishing Derby would not be taking place.

Ms. Hammond indicated the Commission is still hoping to have Soccer Camp in August.

b. Fields

Mr. Quinn asked if the field was looking healthy and Mr. Dalrymple noted it looks good and there is no traffic on it.

c. Playground (currently closed)

Mr. Hadik noted the fields and playgrounds are still closed.

4. Conservation Commission

a. Tree cutting along paths. Already voted on BOS. To chip or not to chip?

Mrs. Neff Ragsdale indicated snag trees make use as habitats. Selectman Myette noted Dick Lewis was asked to go because trees close to the trails could fall. Mr. Hadik noted the Selectmen got a quote for \$3,150 to cut and drag the trees. Selectman Myette noted chipping would be an additional \$1,700. The Selectmen authorized the expenditure. The Forest Account would be a good thing to utilize for this and the Commission voted by email but did not vote to approve chipping.

Selectman Landau asked the Commission if after the trees were cut if they would be in favor of chipping the felled trees or not? Mr. Hadik noted Conservation's vote was probably more important, but the Commission will vote.

Mrs. Reishus motioned to not chip with Conservation Commission's guidance. Mrs. Neff Ragsdale seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, Selectman Myette abstained, and Ms. Hammond abstained. The motion passed 5-0-2.

b. Issues/concerns

Selectman Myette noted the covered bridge is starting to wash out a little but is not a concern yet. Ms. Snyder noted no blockage at the foot bridge. Ranger Wright indicated there is debris under the bridge. Ms. Snyder will look at it again.

5. Ranger John Wright

a. Update

Ranger Wright indicated everything was running fine now. The parking issues could be bad in the summer. One possibility would be to open only the lot near the Community Center. Selectman Myette noted the Community Center is closed to be considered for use as a quarantine facility if necessary.

b. Issues/Concerns?

6. Master Plan – Projects –

a. Pavilion – awaiting design

Selectman Myette noted he has the preliminary design of frame, is waiting on one item and hopes to have the whole package by the next meeting.

7. Miscellaneous

a. Pedestrian traffic count (Madeleine Dilonno – July)

Mr. Hadik indicated this will wait to see if the park is reopened by July and will revisit it next month.

b. ADA Compliance ramp. Senior Center currently closed. Possible quarantine location

Selectman Landau indicated he had nothing new on the ramp.

c. Relocation of excavated material. Nice job with the berm. Thank you, Town Highway Department.

Mr. Hadik noted the area looks very good and provides separation from the road. Mrs. Neff Ragsdale agreed it was a creative way to fix the issue.

8. Adjournment

Next Meeting Date: June 1 or 2, 2020 depending on BOS)

Ms. Quinn motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:57 PM. Ms. Snyder seconded the motion, with all in favor, so moved.

Respectfully submitted,

Daniel Hoijer, Recording Secretary