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*Massachusetts*

Conservation Commission

## Minutes

May 31, 2022

Members Present: Lori Mitchener, Chair; Tomas Sanchez, Vice Chair; Randy Mason, Melissa Campbell

Absent: Lauren Beshara, Jim Cheney, Associate Member, Jennifer Ryan, Administrative Assistant

Staff Present: Leah Basbanes, Conservation Agent

Vice-Chair Tomas Sanchez called the Wednesday March 9th, meeting of the Conservation Commission to order at 6:00 PM, by reading the following statement:

**On June 16, 2021, Governor Baker signed into law An Act Extending Certain COVID-19 Measures Adopted during the State of Emergency. This Act includes an extension, until April 1, 2022, of the remote meeting provisions of his March 12, 2020, Executive Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law. The new law allows public bodies to continue providing live “adequate, alternative means” of public access, i.e. Zoom, to the deliberations of the public body. The law also authorizes all members of a public body to continue participating in meetings remotely.**

**In accordance with the Open Meeting Law, the Conservation Commission states for the record that this meeting is being recorded and may be recorded by other individuals or media.**

**The public can listen/view/participate in this meeting while in progress by joining the Zoom meeting as posted on the Town website. Members of the public attending this meeting virtually will be allowed to make comments if they wish to do so, during the portion of the hearing designated for public comment.**

**The Zoom meeting ID is 863 8940 7512**

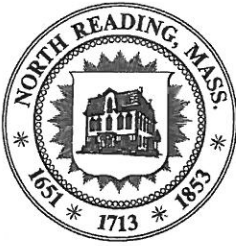
**Further information and the plans for each agenda item may be found on the Town Website [Home](#) >> [Boards & Committees](#) >> [Conservation Commission](#)>>Public Hearings**

## Discussion

Discussion with Alison Polido on Forest Committee Warrant Article for Swan Pond Trail Assessment and Design. Ms. Polido explained the space is underutilized and most people aren't even aware of this area. The lack of awareness leads to issues of people dumping trash, having impromptu parties, ATV rider etc. which results in the land being torn up. Then there's also fire and safety access issues - there's no access for anyone to get in there for emergency reasons. The overall goal is to improve awareness with the public and use it in a controlled manner and improve the trails. Ms. Polido went on to say that they are in the process of looking to hire a professional consultant group to assess and design the trail improvements. They need someone to establish boundaries because of the abutters involved. Another goal is to increase trail accessibility for things like wheelchair use which a professional consultant will be able to provide. Another plan is to have volunteers help with maintenance of the trails. Essex Agricultural School showed interested in potentially doing this as a one or two semester project for their first year students, but they need formal plans before they can do so. In addition, both the Boy Scouts and the Girl Scouts are ready to jump in as well. They are requesting at the upcoming town meeting \$65,000 to hire a consultant to do this assessment and formal design plan of the trail system in the swamp on area and are hoping Conservation will recommend them for the project. Mr. Sanchez wanted to know if any of this land belongs to Danvers. Ms. Polido responded that they have no real comprehensive map that shows who owns which pieces but am hopeful a professional will be able to definitively define the borders.

Lori Mitchener Con Com Chair explained that during the pandemic, lots of people headed outdoors and this has led to an increase in invasive species and erosion issues around the trails because people will inevitably step around obstacles, therefor widening the trails – having more people out there could be detrimental to the ecosystem. Alison Polido responded in agreement but stated that they are not looking to widen the trails and reiterated the amount of trash people are leaving out there because it is not used. Ms. Polido thinks that by increasing the use out there, it will cut back on people going there to dump trash – and make it a nicer space – especially if volunteer groups, like the boy and girl scouts and potentially local businesses that do Earth Day events will go out and maintain the trails once or twice a year. Ms. Mitchener asked if anyone had approached or surveyed the residents of the Swan Pond area for their opinions especially with regard to parking. Ms. Polido responded with no formal survey has been done although Dana Rowe who is a resident over there was going to speak to some of his neighbors. As far as the parking, it is their hope they can make a parking lot out of the area that is already pretty level. She didn't know if the formal design plans would allow for that and is unsure of any future funding but those are options they are looking at and avoid parking along Swan Pond Road. Also, before anything would be done, they would notify and hold public hearings for the local residents and abutters. First goal is to see what can be done with it before bringing it to the public.

Lori Mitchener Con com Chair stated her concern about fires and who would be responsible for managing a forest fire. Ms. Polido did not know the answer to that, but said she would look



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Into it and went onto explain that the consultant they spoke with so far wants their basic goals and priorities and they will tell them their opinion on the design improvement.

Discussion between Ms. Mitchener and Ms. Basbanes with regard to approving plans, structures, wetland replication, etc. that would have limited impact on actual wetlands. Mr. Mason said he was just out there last week and it is pretty ripped up by the ATVs. Everyone agreed ATVs were a big problem and Ms. Polido suggested maybe some boulders could be moved to prevent them from getting through.

Further discussion regarding endangered species and vernal pools and having volunteers with maintenance. Ms. Polido also stated that the Financial Committee and Select Boards have voted and the School Committee does not want to be involved.

Motion made by Mr. Sanchez, seconded by Ms. Campbell; voted 4-0  
to issue support for the funding request by the Forrest Committee.



**Adjourn**

Mr. Sanchez moved, seconded by Ms. Mitchener, and voted 4-0;  
That the Conservation Commission adjourn the meeting at 6:40:57 PM

Approved  Dated 27 July 2022