

# STRAFFORD CONSERVATION COMMISSION

March 28, 2017

## MINUTES

Present at the Morrill Education Building at 7 p.m. were commission members: Mike Hebb, Kate Root, Jared Jenisch, Steve Faccio, Tim McCormick, Dave Paganelli, and Steve Willbanks, Chair. Also present were Kate Siepmann (Selectboard) and Paul Harwood.

- Approval of 2/28/17 Minutes deferred until 4/25/17 meeting
- Introduction of new members: Steve Faccio, Tim McCormick, Dave Paganelli
- Dave Paganelli, County Forester, spoke on the management plan for the Town Forest:
  - If there was at one time a management plan, it may have been misplaced
  - He has gone through all correspondence and timber sale records for the Town Forest, which is variously held to be 140-150 acres
  - He offered a brief history of the Town Forest. In 1969 it became a municipal forest. In 46 years there have been 6 timber sales; every part of it has been harvested, most of it twice. It has provided more than \$40,000 in income to the town. The last timber sale was in 2001; an 11 acre clear-cut has regenerated well, the outer edges are principally beech, the inner band mostly sugar maple.
  - It was noted that the principal use of the Town Forest now is to view Showy Lady Slipper Orchids in June; Mike estimates there has been over 100 visitors
  - Dave noted that the authority for timber sales rests with the Selectboard; in some towns the selectboard will delegate authority for that to the Conservation Commission or another board
  - Current management might entail: re-marking boundaries, or at least re-flagging them; confirming trails; determining if there are unhealthy areas, overcrowded stands to be managed for timber, etc. The state can manage a municipal forest at no cost if a town wants, but at the town's discretion; the town can do what it wants with trails, etc. The first step would be for the town to request a management plan. The SCC might draw up such a plan in conjunction with the County Forester, and then submit it to the Selectboard for approval
  - Noted that some towns set up a conservation fund funded by proceeds from timber sales, which can be used for signs, boardwalks, kiosks, boundary markings, etc.
- Proposals for commemoration of John Hemenway. Steve W. noted that two scenarios have been suggested: 1. A bench in his name on the Townhouse hill, on the Strafford common, or on the Hemenway property in near the Townhouse; 2. A trail in on the Hemenway property in Taylor Valley dedicated to him
  - Paul Harwood shared an aerial photo of the Hemenway properties in Taylor Valley. The best location for a trail is probably in the "South Block"; north of where Hemenway Road intersects with Taylor Valley Road there is a landing area that could be a parking lot for a loop trail. The trail would traverse woods without a destination or overlook. Dave asked about a bench by the waterfalls in the brook; Paul wondered about the risk of vandalism.
  - Mike proposed a plaque for the recognition of Hemenway and future citizens without putting too many benches on the common

- Kate noted that it would be good to have more places for the elderly to sit on the common
- Steve W. suggested that the SCC plan to take some hikes around the Townhouse area on Hemenway land and in the Taylor Valley properties, and then reassess the options
- Paul mentioned the old mill site on Hemenway Road and wondered whether this might make an interesting destination for a trail
- Kate proposed an interpretive trail with educational plaques identifying interesting features and species along the trail
- Trails. Mike has produced a trail map to sell and raise money for trail maintenance. It is packaged and annotated with parking areas. It is available now for sale from Mike; it will be advertised through the internet and a note in the Town Office. Mike proposed a walk to be led in the Town Forest by Kate and/or Mike to view flowers that bloom in late May
- Wetlands. Kate noted that Jared and Kate had their first wetland meeting to inaugurate the new season. Wetland visits will be organized as last year with a common pool of volunteers that can attend walks led by either Kate or Jared. They will try to visit at least eight wetlands over the course of the season. Kate Siepmann asked the reason for visiting wetlands, and Jared and Kate talked about the value of creating a more complete inventory of Strafford wetlands and its possible use to the Planning Commission; the documentation of wetland species and the provision of species lists to landowners; and the creation of an illustrated field guide to the most common Strafford wetland species. Paul asked about inventories of other features in town like deer yards.
- New Business.
  - Steve W. proposed that Dave Paganelli offer another tour of his property.
  - Steve W. noted that the state will create historic marker for the original Old City Falls settlement area, to be placed at the pull-off area for the Falls; asked Tim to mow a path from the parking area to the Old City Cemetery, for which there is currently no signage
- Next meeting: April 25, 2017
- Kate Siepmann noted that she was attending the SCC meeting in her capacity as Selectboard member and offered to be the liaison between the Selectboard and the SCC.

Respectfully submitted,  
 Jared Jenisch, Recording Secretary