

# WENONAH ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes  
March 8, 2017

Chairman Scott Barnes called the Wenonah Environmental Commission to order at 7:31 in accordance with the Open Public Meeting Act at the Jack C. Sheppard Sr. Community Center.

<u>ROLL CALL</u>	<u>PRESENT</u>	<u>ABSENT</u>
Scott Barnes (Chair. / Planning Bd. Rep.)	X	
Sharon Ceravolo	X	
Maria Ceravolo	X	
Bob Bevilacqua		X
Rich Dilks (Sec.)	X	
Dave Kreck (V. Chair.)	X	
Julie Ream		X

**Associate Member Present:** Dave Coates

**Public Guests Present:** Heidi Congalton

The minutes of the February 8 meeting were approved as amended: (Motion: M. Ceravolo, Second: S. Ceravolo, AIF)

## **Chairman's Report- Scott Barnes**

### **Review**

**The moonlight hike at Wenonah Lake on Feb. 11.** Scott noted this was a very successful event. We had approximately 15 participants. Although the moon was obscured by clouds, hikers saw and heard a tail slap by the lake's resident beaver.

### **Near Term Projects**

**Clay Hill.** Dave reported repairs there are almost complete. He said Bob rebuilt the failed bulkhead section, an approximately 4 hr. job and Dave backfilled the bulkhead with dirt the Borough had delivered to the end of S. Jackson Ave., which also took several hrs. Just a small amount of back fill is still needed to complete the job.

**Jack Costantino's Eagle Scout Project on Mantua Creek Trail.** Dave reported the Scout Council has now approved the project. Dave had submitted a report that addressed the council's concerns about wetlands disturbance. Dave indicated the trail section is in a tidal flood hazard zone, not in wetlands. He said the project requires compliance with FHA Permit By Rule, which does not require submission to NJDEP. The project will take place on the existing trail with essentially no disturbance to vegetation and there is no fill requirement. Dave said he would be present for the installation of the project and will monitor the work. He also said the Jack is ready to purchase materials ( we have funding in the 2016 budget of \$1487, that can assist with this).It is uncertain whether the project would be ready by or after the spring work party date of March 18.

**Beavers.** Sharon reported on the visit to our beaver active areas on Feb. 19 by Veronica Van Hof, Dir. of Unexpected Wildlife Refuge. She said Veronica deemed the height of our proposed walkway to be quite adequate. She also said that there is currently a good flow through the dam at the first bridge. She did suggest we install a wire cage to help prevent debris from clogging the flow through pipe. Sharon said Bob has looked into this and will install the cage when the weather gets warmer. Veronica also noted that beavers come and go from an area and that over time the beaver ponds and dams could disappear. Veronica said there is a family of beavers here with 3 or more individuals. She also noted the smaller of the two adjacent lodges in the pond likely belongs to a yearling that has not yet set out completely on his own. Sharon reported

that a friend commended the WEC for our policy of living with the beavers and seeking solutions that accommodate them and people. Maria noted there was a rake stuck in the dam and that someone had been attempting to pull parts of the dam apart. Sharon brought up the need to install the sign to warn the public not to interfere with the dam. Julie ( who was absent from this meeting due to travel) has designed the sign. Sharon will discuss the sign with Julie when she is available. Dave reported he has heard that someone may be trapping or snaring beavers. One report had someone with a car parked near the Mantua Creek bridge. Dave said this was unsubstantiated but that everyone should be vigilant and report any suspicious behavior to the police.

**Lions Project.** Maria reported Dan Ceravolo will shortly be meeting with a lumber supplier.

### **Trail Maintenance**

**Inappropriate activities.** Maria reported that someone has been placing small toys along the trail, and that after they were removed, more appeared. Whatever the motive, this is essentially littering and inappropriate for a natural area. Maria also said there was a game camera near the beaver dam. Maria said she would give the owner a chance to remove it but report it to the police if he/she did not. Maria also said green arrows have been spray painted on some trees. Dave Coates informed us that the same green arrows have appeared at Tall Pines. He speculated some running group may be responsible.

**Minnow trapping.** Dave reported that someone had been trapping minnows in Mantua Creek, near the Mullens property, on a commercial scale. This violates not only Borough ordinances but also state regulations that limit fishermen to a 35 minnow per day catch. Dave reported he saw a minnow trap in the water but that now it has been removed. He also noted the large numbers of minnows he had previously seen in the creek are also gone. He said he hoped that was because they have migrated rather than having been trapped, but he has no way to determine that.

**Trail maintenance map.** Maria presented a trail map she compiled that indicates with notes all the identified areas on the trail system in need of maintenance or improvement. This is a very useful tool for organizing, prioritizing and tracking projects. Maria is also compiling a list of all bridges on the trail system and will forward that to Scott. The following items noted on the map are pending or completed:

1. Bridge on Monongahela Loop Tr. In need of repair.
2. Synnott's Pond area – bridge in need of repair.
3. Comey's Lake- E. Cherry St access trail is now opened, likely by young people.
4. Monongahela Brook Tr.- a large den near trail, possibly a groundhog's.
5. Monongahela Brook Tr. north of bog walk- two muddy spots need ponchions and leaves need to be raked off trail.
6. M.C. T. east of Glen Tr.- a fallen dead tree needs to be cleared.
7. M. C. T. holes filled. Dave completed.
8. M.C. T. access trail from W. Cherry needs to be completed.
9. Break Back Run Tr.- new trail rails need to be installed.
10. Break Back Run Tr. Access trail at Jefferson and Buttonwood needs to be cleared, but conservation area boundary needs to be determined first.
11. Connecting trail near Wenonah Lake- tree down.
12. Wenonah Lake Loop Tr.- cleanup needed by bench area.
13. Wenonah Lake.- Eggert Trail sign replaced. Done by Bob & Rich.

It was also noted that there is beaver activity in Queens Lake (Deptford). Sharon said she was told that historically there were lakes where the beaver ponds are now on the Eldridge Trail.

**March 18 Work Party.** It was decided we would meet and then could break up into smaller parties and take up several projects. Dave said we could fill some of the holes on the Glen Trail caused by uprooted trees. Scott mentioned there is a large hole on the east side of the rr tracks but getting fill dirt to the area would be a challenge. Dave said he would discuss this with Kenny at Public Works. Dave noted there is just a little fill still needed at Clay Hill. It was also

suggested that with longer daylight hours coming, we could schedule early evening weeknight mini work parties for projects.

Maria said she and Dan can put up an owl box in the Synnott's Pond area. Maria said that few people walk the short loop trail there but that the area could be improved with plantings and benches into a destination or meditation area.

**Tools.** Dave noted he has not yet fund a storage area for the tools we have purchased that would be accessible on weekends. Public Works facilities are locked then. He said he will keep them in his shed for now and they would be accessible there when we need them.

Dave also noted many more people, including out of towners, are now using our trails. This points up a need for additional trail direction signs for people unfamiliar with the trails. Sharon said the kiosk has focused public attention on our trails.

Visitor Heidi Congalton inquired about the right of way for the proposed light rail. Scott replied that if built, it will run on the existing rr right of way.

Rich reported that Denise Berg told him that the interpretive sign at Comey's lake has been vandalized. It was just replaced in June 2016. Rich said he would check it out and can have a replacement sign printed for \$39.

Rich also reported that Princeton Hydro has sent him a copy of the NJDEP Aquatic Pesticide General Permit for Dilks Pond for 2017-8.

**Friends of Wenonah Trails Account.**

Expenses:\$100 for Birdquest sponsorship

Deposits: \$3.00 trail guide sales

Current balance: \$9,083.14

MEETING ADJOURNED at 8:30 PM. (Motion: S. Ceravolo, Second: Kreck, AIF)

Minutes respectfully submitted,  
Rich Dilks, Sec.