

# WENONAH ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes

March 11, 2020

Chairman Scott Barnes called the Wenonah Environmental Commission to order at 7:30 P. M. 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	
Scott Conway	X	
Maria Ceravolo	X	
Rich Dilks (Sec.)	X	
Dave Kreck (V. Chair.)	X	
Julie Ream	X	

**Associate Members Present:** Bob Bevilacqua.

**Public Guest Present:** Mike and Kierson Graham, Kate and John Sporer

The minutes of the February, 2020 meeting were approved as amended.  
(Motion: S. Ceravolo Second: Kreck AIF)

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

**Unauthorized boardwalk at Break Back Run.** Dave reported he met with the current owner of 735 Leslie Ave. Deptford, Mike Graham (Mike and Kierson Graham were also in attendance at tonight's meeting) from whose property the boardwalk extends. Mr. Graham said the extension was built prior to his moving to 735 Leslie Ave. and he had been unaware of the encroachment issue. Dave said he inspected the boardwalk which has an older section that crosses Break Back Run and a newer extension almost to the BBR Trail consisting of treads. Dave had been concerned the older section could cause stream blockage and flooding if debris were to be trapped by it. He said the clearance of the bridge was high enough that he felt that was not a serious concern. Dave also said that removing the section of the old boardwalk that is encroaching on conservation lands would be difficult and create significant disturbance to the area. He recommended the old boardwalk remain in place and the tread extension be removed by Mike Graham. Both the WEC and the Grahams agreed to this solution. It was pointed out that with the treads removed hikers would be less likely to use the old boardwalk and with the growth of summer vegetation it would become less conspicuous.

### **Review.**

**Spring Work Party, Sat. March 28 at 9AM.** Scott Barnes noted the main activity will be to continue to back fill the bridge bulkheads at MCT near W. Cherry St. He said he would instruct volunteers to meet at the Borough yard there. Dave said he will have additional dirt fill from the Borough and from a neighbor available. It was noted we will also address the erosion undercutting the bulkhead there with cement bags. It was suggested that, dependent on turnout, this would be a good opportunity for the Boy Scouts to do the debris removal on the trails there. Sharon is contacting Scoutmaster Max Pozza for scouts to participate in the work party. She is also reaching out to Gateway students and the Gateway environmental interns. Maria said working on the puncheons would also be a possible activity that day.

### **Near Term Projects.**

**Bog Walk.** Bob reported that Timber-Cut Tree Service had removed the cluster of fallen trees (7 or 8 trees in all) that was blocking the drainage of the area around the bog walk. Bob noted

the water level has already dropped significantly. The cost of the removal was \$1200 and payment to Timber-Cut was approved:

(Motion: Kreck Second: Dilks AIF)

Dave and Bob had been working on the puncheons there and Bob hopes to get out this Sat. to try to stabilize the area and put down some gravel. Dave said he plans to deepen the drainage channel there as well. Bob said the bog walk itself is in a very difficult environment to work with. He said the mud and loose material goes down about 56 inches before you hit solid strata, which makes driving in supports very challenging. Lifting the bog walk would also be unrealistically difficult to do under these conditions. Bob suggested we do a modest short term fix for now to address safety and stability issues and then plan a more substantial long term fix. Sharon suggested one long term solution would be to construct a new bog walk directly over the existing one, such as the raised boardwalk on Eldridge Trail. It was suggested this too could be a joint WEC-Lions Club project. Maria noted the Lions Club has expressed interest in a renovation project at Clay Hill but that we could discuss the bog walk with them as well. Dave said he would meet with some of the Lions to discuss possibilities.

**Poster Shelters.** We plan to install 4 shelters and leave one in reserve. Dave said we will need to do a mark out at least 72 hours before digging to assure we will not damage any underground utilities. The shelter locations can be marked with a painted square. It was noted the right of way on most streets is 16 ft. and is 25 ft. on Mantua Ave. The installing of two signs at Hayes Ave. and Mantua Ave. to guide hikers between the BBR and MCT trails was discussed. A simple sign with an upward pointing arrow and the word "Trail" was agreed to. The signs would be about 12" x 6". Bob said he could get the signs done.

**Berg signs.** Julie said there was no new information on the signs and that content still needs to be designed. Sharon said she could talk to a Women's Club member so see if they might support this project.

**Stone Memorial for Chuck.** Bob said he has a small granite stone on which a memorial text can be engraved. The stone is 24" x 12" and the engraving would cost \$600-700. It was suggested a cowboy hat might also be engraved on the stone. Scott B. asked Rich to write a draft of the memorial text. Maria suggested we could also name a hike for Chuck, such as the Chuck Forsman Moonlight Hike.

#### Trail Maintenance.

**Bees at Clay Hill.** Dave reported there were large numbers of ground burrowing bees active now at Clay Hill. Dave was concerned they could be a hazard to hikers and a problem if we undertake renovation work there. Julie said she would contact Dean Polk, an entomologist who lives on W. Cedar for advice.

**Comeys Lake fountain.** It was agreed that the fountain could be turned on now that the threat of severe winter weather is over. Scott B. said he could inform the homeowner they could restart the fountain at their convenience.

**Garden Trail plaque.** Scott B. and Julie both said they were unable to find the stone plaque at the stone pool garden when they were last there. Bob said it was likely buried under leaves and debris, and that he will check.

**Tea House Graffiti.** Scott Conway reported there was some minor graffiti at the Tea House, a name and a drawing of a cow done with black marker on a cross beam. He said he would paint it over.

**Indian Trail.** Julie said she now favors using extra puncheons in the muddy areas rather than relocating the section of the trail near the intersection with the Eldridge Trail.

**Break ack Run Trail.** Sharon reported the volunteer working on the boardwalk near N. Jackson will be having shoulder surgery and will be unable to continue work there for a time. She hopes the project can be completed in June.

**Bikes on the trails.** Scott B. reported Elaine Goodman had contacted him about young people riding their bikes on some of our trails. Scott B. noted that the Borough Code prohibits motorized vehicles but not bicycles. After a general discussion, it was agreed that although riding on trails

when conditions are muddy can rut and degrade trails at times, the occasional cycling on the trails is not a major concern or threat to the trails, and we would not press for any changes in the Code to prohibit it.

**Prospective Easements.** Dave brought up the idea of prospective easements and said he will seek clarification from the Borough Solicitor as to whether this would apply to sections of our trails that are on private land. The notion is that if a trail on private land has been in public use for a number of years (TBD) that it becomes a legally enforceable prospective easement.

**Private memorials on conservation land.** Julie mentioned that there was someone who was interested in putting a memorial for a deceased parent in the conservation area. It was generally agreed we have had a long standing policy of not allowing this. Further sections of the conservation area preserved under Stewart Estate regulations would prohibit these memorials.

**Old map on the wall.** Scott B. had noticed there was a framed copy of the WEC 2000 Trail Guide on the wall of the Community Center. Julie offered to take the frame and replace the old guide with our new one.

**Railroad crossing visual obstruction law.** Scott B. said a recently passed state law mandates the clearing of trees and other vegetative visual obstructions at railroad crossings for up to 300 ft. in each direction. It was unclear what effect this may have on trees on conservation lands along the RR line.

**American Legion Yearbook.** Scott B. said the Legion has not yet formally contacted us to participate in the yearbook. It is prospectively due out for Fourth of July.

**2020 Duckweed/Algae treatments for Comey's Lake & Dilks Pond.** Rich reported Princeton Hydro has sent us proposals for both ponds for 2020. Dilks Pond would be treated for \$1968, a 7.5% increase over last year. Dilks Pond is still under the two year DEP permit issued last year. Comey's Lake would be treated for \$3255, a 5% increase over last year. A new two year DEP permit would be need for Comey's Lake with a \$150.00 permit fee due. PH also offered a two year contract for Comey'S Lake, locking in the 2020 price. After a brief discussion, it was agreed to contract for Dilks Pond for 2020 and for Comey's Lake for both 2020 and 2021. The total cost for 2020 would be \$5223, a 5.9% increase over 2019.

(Motion: Kreck Second: Ream AIF)

**Friends of Wenonah Trails Account Activity since last meeting.**

**Deposits: \$81.00 trail guide sales.**

**Expenses none.**

**Current balance: \$8,211.35**

MEETING ADJOURNED at 8:34 PM.  
(Motion: Ream, Second: S. Ceravolo, AIF)

Minutes respectfully submitted,  
Rich Dilks, Sec.