

WENONAH ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

Meeting
Minutes
September 8, 2021

Chairman Scott Barnes called the Wenonah Environmental Commission to order at 6:31 P. M. in accordance with the Open Public Meeting Act at the Tea House.

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

Associate Members Present: Dave Coates. Dave participated as the member of the WEC to establish a quorum for the meeting.

Public Guests Present: Mayor John Dominy, Matt & Jamie Grandowicz (owners of the home overlooking Comy's Lake).

The minutes of the August 2021 meeting were approved as standing.
(Motion: Horn, Second: Barnes, AIF)

Chairman's Report- Scott Barnes

Near Term Projects

Tornado Recovery and Trail Condition Assessment. In response to the Sept. 1 EF-3 tornado that struck Wenonah and portions of the conservation area, Scott B. presented a preliminary assessment of what we current know of conditions on the trails and woodlands. The NE, NW and SE quadrants seem to have suffered only minor damage. The SW quadrant, including Mantua Creek Trail upstream from Clay Hill, seems to have sustained major damage to the woodlands and numerous blockages of the trails.

School Trail. A large tree fell from school property onto the trail near E. Elm St. The section inside the school fence has been cleaned up but not the section along the trail.

Wenonah Lake Trail & Break Back Run Trail. Clear with minimal damage. However large amounts of debris (plastic, roofing, etc) was scattered over the north section of BBR Trail and part of the Wenonah Lake Trail. Volunteers will be needed to clean up.

Eldridge Trail and Comey's Lake Loop Trail. Clear with minimal damage.

Indian Trail spur. Not yet assessed.

Monongahela Brook Trail and Bog Walk. Not yet assessed.

Garden Trail. Not yet assessed.

Glen Trail. The trail head on W. Cedar is completely blocked by downed trees and limbs. The interior of the trail has not yet been assessed.

W. Cedar and W. Willow access trails for MCT. Both access trails are blocked with downed trees and limbs. The S. Jackson access trail to Clay Hill is also blocked.

Mantua Creek Trail. Clear and passable from Mantua Ave. to Clay Hill. Clay Hill and the new steps and benches are unharmed. MCT upstream from Clay Hill is impassable with numerous downed trees and massive tree damage. A more detailed assessment needs to be done to

determine the actual extent of the damage. Mayor Dominy said the short bridge leading to the island is gone and the eastern half of the trail on the island obliterated. Dave Kreck plans to go out and assess damage on MCT this coming Friday. It was suggested that if we can open a second access trail to Clay Hill and MCT, the best opportunity might be the W. Willow St. trail, but we would need to determine the extent of the blockages there first and also assess any unstable trees.

It was agreed that assessing the damage is the necessary first step to putting in place a plan to clear and reopen the blocked trails. We will then need to prioritize sections to clear and organize volunteers into work parties. Scott B. said someone has volunteered the use of a 36" chain saw. He also said perhaps a local tree service might be willing to assist us for large trees. We should also inquire about any grant monies or assistance from emergency funds that might be available.

Public Outreach. Julia will post on social media and Scott B. will send out a email informing the public what trails are open for use and which are closed and impassable. Once we schedule work parties, we can use the our volunteers' list and social media to recruit help. Jamie Grandowicz noted a hiking group called the Trail Girls, contacted her about doing a cleanup at Comey's Lake. They could possibly be helpful doing debris cleanup on BBR and Wenonah Lake Trails. Jamie said she would contact them.

Possible assistance. Mayor Dominy reported he has been in communications with OEM and that workers from the NJ State Forestry Service are now giving assistance to Wenonah. He aid it might be possible that the state could do some clearing in the conservation area as part of keeping the Mantua Creek waterway clear.

Clay Hill Project and ACE/SJ Grant. Scott B. noted that Sharon had met with the ACE video team at Clay Hill last month and was completing the final report for submission this month to receive the second half of our grant. The permanent plaque should be received by Julie shortly.

Yellow jacket nests on trails. Scott B. said underground nests have been reported on the MCT and at Comey's Lake, by the stone bench. While the insects are not normally aggressive to humans, if someone is walking a dog on the trails and the dog disturbs the nest, they can become aggressive and attack. It was suggested that putting up temporary warning signage would be appropriate. Rich noted that this is a temporary problem since in the fall all the yellow jackets, except the queen, will die off and the nests will be abandoned.

Possible changes in Stewart Estate Trust. Mayor Dominy reported the Stewart Estate is seeking through court action to alter the terms of how its monies are dispensed. Currently the SET only funds the acquisition of natural lands. The Trust has reported it had not been able to find sufficient new acquisitions to fund and would be interested in also granting funding assistance to current holders of SET acquired lands (such as the Borough of Wenonah) for land management and trail maintenance. Mayor Dominy said the Borough supports this change and has filed support papers with the court. He said a decision on this is likely by the end of the year.

Mad Hatter's Tree Party. Scott B. said the nature club has planned the event for the Sunday, Oct. 24 from 1 to 3 P.M. on the Eldridge Trail and at the Tea House. He said the nature club is looking to the WEC to help with logistics and volunteers. He said the nature club is also looking for someone to play the Mad Hatter. A final decision on holding the event will likely be made at the 9/12 GCNC exec. meeting.

Comey's Lake fountain. Matt Grandowicz informed us that the timer for the fountain went off and he did not know the schedule he should set it to. It was agreed the fountain should run during daylight hours only and that a 9 to 5 schedule would be fine. Scott B. noted the fountain had formerly been removed from the lake in winter but that that was a difficult operation. For several years now, the fountain has remained in the lake over winter but not operating. Scott also said the fountain is likely coming soon to the end of its useful life. The Grandowicz's offered to help out with maintenance around Comey's Lake. Jamie inquired whether there were any plans to make Comey's Lake an active recreational lake. It was explained that the lake would simply be maintained as it is now.

Donations. Rich reported we have received \$400 in donations this past month. There were four donations. Three were in response to our appeal for funds for the Bog Walk project and one was a donation from a couple planning a wedding at the Tea House.

Friends of Wenonah Trails Account Activity since the August 2021 meeting.

Deposits: **\$400.00** donations

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Expenses: **\$114.70** to Scott Conway for trail maintenance materials.

Current balance: \$4,700.10

MEETING ADJOURNED at 7:10 PM.
(Motion: Horn, Second: Barnes, AIF)

Minutes respectfully submitted,
Rich Dilks, Sec.