

# WENONAH ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

Meeting  
Minutes  
December 14, 2022

Chairman Scott Barnes called the Wenonah Environmental Commission to order at 7:37 P. M. in accordance with the Open Public Meeting Act at the conclusion of the WEC's annual Volunteer Appreciation Night 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	
Rich Dilks (Sec.)	X	
Julia Horn (via teleconference)	X	
Dave Coates	X	
Julie Ream (V. Chair.)	X	

**Associate Members Present:** none.

**Public Guests:** Alex Pozza.

The minutes of the November 2022 meeting were approved as corrected.  
(Motion: Ceravolo, Second: Coates, AIF)

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

### **Review**

**Clean Communities Day, 11/12.** WEC activities consisted of a trash cleanup around the lowered Wenonah Lake and the dismantling of the "dugout fort" on the School Trail.

**Glen Trail plantings 11/26.** Volunteers planted 7 trees along the exposed section of the Glen Trail. They consisted of a tulip tree donated by Gary O. and 6 trees purchased from Exley's: two eastern white pine, two eastern red cedar, a flowering dogwood and an eastern redbud. The plantings went smoothly and the site was then mulched.

### **Trail Maintenance**

**Comey's Lake.** It was noted that Bob reported that the Comey's Lake dam is leaking and the lake has dropped between 6 inches and a foot. Bob, Dave Kreck and Scott B. will meet at the site to assess the situation. Scott C. said it seems to be a problem with the wooden baffles that control the lake level. Scott C. said he believes a solution is possible but the condition of the dam will need to be analyzed. It was noted that a major reconstruction or replacement of the dam would be extremely expensive and require NJDEP permits, which might be difficult or impossible to acquire.

**Eldridge Trail.** It was noted the board placed by the Borough at the trail head on E. Pine St. seem inadequate to control water flow down the slope of the trail. We were hoping for a more substantial structure. Scott B. will speak to Dave K. to determine the Borough's plans for erosion control there.

**Monongahela Loop Trail.** Scott B. said the MLT is still walkable and that he hiked it recently. He said the footbridge over the Monongahela Branch is still in usable shape.

**Mantua Creek Trail.** Julie reported there is a large dead and rotting tree down near the trestle. It is a climb over/under and not a step over. Scott C. suggested taking steps to make it easier for hikers to navigate the tree but leaving it in place to discourage motorcycle activity in the

area. Scott C. noted there was a step over tree also on that section of trail. Having seen motorcycle track at that site, he decided to leave the tree as a barrier to motorcyclists.

**Monongahela Brook Trail.** Julie reported that beaver had taken down a tree just west of the Bog Walk, near where vandals had chopped down several trees. She said the beavers had also been working on the cut trees as well. Julie said she could wire some trees in the area. Sharon noted that Elaine Goodman, who's property borders the Bog Walk area just west of S. Marion Ave. has had considerable beaver activity and that they have taken down a number of trees on her property.

**Boy Scout Island.** Scott B. noted, and displayed a photo of, a large 100 ft. tree gnawed by beavers. It was decided not to wire it.

**Wenonah Lake.** Scott B. noted there was no recent activity at the Wenonah Lake party spots. He also said that a pallet seems to have been deliberately placed across the stream where the old beaver dam was located on the stream north of the lake. Scott C. said extending the foot bridge at the stream north of the lake was as likely project for the coming year.

**School Trail.** Scott B. noted some materials from the dugout fort were still piled at the trail entrance at Maple St. Sharon said she would contact Brian at Public Works.

**Break Back Run.** Scott C. noted there was a downed tree on the trail backing up water and silt in a ravine near Rich's house. He said he will go down and clear the area.

**Glen Trail.** Julie, Pat and Scott C. will clean up the left over mulch on W. Cedar St. Scott C. and Sharon will check the trail route for the Moonlight Hike for any problems prior to the hike. It was noted there is a piece of cement on the Glen Trail that is a potential tripping hazard. Scott B. also noted the vegetation near the old dam on the Glen Trail needs to be cut back. Scott C. said he would get to that this winter/spring.

**Possible grant for Wenonah Lake playground.** Alex Pozza informed the WEC that the Lake Board and Borough were considering applying for a grant (Jan. deadline) for improvements to the playground. Alex said he was unsure what the overall plans for the playground are or how the criteria of the grant would fit into them. He said he strongly felt that the naturalistic elements of the site should be preserved. WEC member Julia has been invited to the Borough-Lake Board discussions and will keep the WEC informed.

**WEC 2023 budget request.** Rich reported that Borough has sent us the form to request our budget for 2023. Rich noted our budget request last year was \$8,500. \$5,500 of that went to the Princeton Hydro pond treatments. It was also noted that a significant portion of the costs of major projects this year, such as the Bog Walk and the Glen Trail planting were offset by outside donations. Scott C. said we had purchased additional lumber this year so that we already have much of the material needed for projects such as the Wenonah Lake bridge extension. It was agreed that we would request \$8,500 for 2023.

(Motion: Coates, Second: Ceravolo, AIF)

**WEC term of office dates.** Scott B. reported that Karen Sweeney sent him the term of office date for all WEC members. The only term expiring this year was for Rich. Rich agreed to serve another 3 year term (2023-2025).

**Stewart Estate maintenance grants.** Julie reported she found information on the grants on the Stewart Estate website. They do offer grants for maintenance and projects. She said they average issuing 1 to 2 grants per year with an average award of \$150,000. Scott B reminded the WEC that the grant could be given only for those portions of the conservation area purchased with Stewart Estate funds.

**Moonlight Hike.** The hike is coming up on Fri. Jan 6, 2023 at 8 PM. It was suggested that it would be interesting to take hikers past the tornado damaged areas on the Glen Trail. After discussion, it was decided to begin the hike at the Glen Trail head on W. Cedar and exit the

trails onto S. Jackson. Alex offered to request the hike be promoted on the town marquee but the WEC decided to forgo that idea for fear it would result in an overly large crowd for the hike.

**Letter to Conservation Area Neighbors.** It was decided to drop the 2<sup>nd</sup> page with the ordinance reprint. Instead there will be a reference on the 1<sup>st</sup> page citing the ordinance that covers conservation area activity. Scott. B. said we can send the letter out shortly after the new year, after the new administration has taken office. He said the Borough seems willing to help with the mailing and will use the addresses based on the tax records. Scott. B. said it was uncertain what the WEC's obligation for postage costs will be.

**Signs.** Julie reported she now has the new conservation area sign for S. Marion Ave. but had not yet installed it. The sign was done by Sign Boy at a cost of \$275. Julie also noted she had a mockup for small signs called "Rules of the Trails" that could be installed next to other signs, such as the poster shelters.

**Monthly educational articles.** Julia noted she will be putting out the next article shortly and urged any of us that have ideas for articles to let her know.

**Gateway adapt-a-trail proposal.** Sharon said she will be meeting with Chris Better from Gateway to determine what interest there is for the project at Camels Back Loop and what activities students might be interested in.

**Planning Board.** Scott B. said the PB is reviewing a new variance request on the former Lentz property. Scott B. recalled a former owner received a variance for an oversized garage in 2015. The property has changed owners twice since then and the current owner is requesting a variance for a swimming pool and deck. Scott said he did not believe this would affect our trails, even though a section of the W. Cedar access trail crossed the property.

**ANJEC application.** Rich noted we received an application for membership from ANJEC. The cost is \$400 per year. The WEC again declined to join on the basis that the cost exceeds the value of the benefits of membership.

### **Friends of Wenonah Trails Account Activity since the November 2022 meeting.**

#### **Expenses**

\$275.00 to Sign Boy for conservation area sign.

\$525.00 to Exley's for 6 trees for the Glen Trail plantings

\$800.00 total expenses.

#### **Deposits**

None.

**Current Balance: \$4,915.74**

MEETING ADJOURNED at 9:07 PM.  
(Motion: Ream, Second Conway: AIF)

Minutes respectfully submitted,  
Rich Dilks, Sec.