



City of Keene, New Hampshire

Greater Goose Pond Forest Stewardship Subcommittee

Thursday, August 12, 2021

8:30 AM

2nd fl Conference Room, City Hall

Subcommittee Members

Members Present:

Thomas P. Haynes, Chair
Art Walker
Steven Bill

Members Not Present:

Andy Bohannon, Parks & Rec Director

Staff Present:

Rhett Lamb, Community Development Director/ACM
Corinne Marcou, Administrative Assist.

1. Minutes – July 8, 2021 meeting

Chair Haynes opened the meeting at 8:33 AM and asked for a motion to accept the July minutes. Mr. Walker made the motion with Mr. Bill second. Chair Haynes mentioned a correction on page two that it states sing, not sign. He continued that the minutes mention Mr. Madison, which it should be Mr. Bohannon. The minutes were approved unanimously.

2. Membership:

Mr. Lamb stated that he would not be able to remain in the meeting as he has another to attend and will be leaving at 9:15 AM. He did state that he had not been able to connect with Councilor Kate Bosley whom he has asked for recommendations for this subcommittee membership of any abutter/neighbor to Goose Pond. He will report to the subcommittee once he has an opportunity to discuss this with Councilor Bosley.

Chair Haynes mentioned that the members of NEMBA are interested in the subcommittee, though it is not known as of yet which member that will be. He continued that he is in communication with Mr. Bohannon to recommend an active and engaged Goose Pond community member. Chair Haynes concluded by saying that as the subcommittee moved through its tasks, they could reach out for expert advice as needed.

3. Discussion Items

Chair Haynes asked Mr. Lamb if there were any other items for discussion prior to his needing to leave. Mr. Lamb did state that Ms. Marcou create an Excel spreadsheet based off on the work from Mr. Bill which can be used moving forward. Chair Haynes thanks staff for the work then moved to discuss the member's top five priorities prior to Mr. Lamb leaving.

a. Members top five priorities

Chair Haynes asked Mr. Lamb if he also chose his top five priorities. Mr. Lamb stated that he did not as the intent was to meet with Mr. Bohannon to collectively choose the City's top priorities but with vacation times, and scheduling conflicts, they hadn't met, though he stated Mr. Bohannon's strong interest. Mr. Lamb suggested that the subcommittee members outline their priorities first, which he will report to the subcommittee after meeting with Mr. Bohannon.

Chair Haynes began that his priorities are segmented by the report's three recommendations, which are, 1. Community Outreach and Education, 2. Wildlife Habitat and Forest Stewardship 3. Recreational Trails Stewardship. He continued stating that what stood out the most was the Wildlife Habitat and Forest Stewardship demonstration sites as these could tie into the Community Outreach and Education aspect of the report. These sites, which could point out old growth areas, vernal pools, and other areas of interest to guide Greater Goose Pond users, can begin the outreach and education aspect.

He continued that another priority high on his list from the Community Outreach and Education aspect is surveying the users of Greater Goose Pond either by compiling previous surveys and/or conducting new surveys which can then be a useful tool moving forward.

Chair Haynes then moved into the second category, Wildlife Habitat and Forest Stewardship with identifying the need for marking boundaries, which will occur as needed. He continued with designing specific areas as ecological reserves, while educating the public on the preservation of these sites. He continued that with the importance of preserving the water quality, protecting the property and informing the public are high on his priority.

As for the Wildlife Habitat and Forest Stewardship segment, establishing an ecological monitoring program based off the surveys to create a baseline data for vegetation and wildlife to engage the community. Chair Haynes further stated this would tie into the Community Outreach and Education aspect of demonstration sites with vernal pools and other interests.

Chair Haynes moved into the Recreational Trails Stewardship section stating this was his area of top importance. His first priority is improving trail blazing and signage with a much more cohesive uniformity to the trail names, junction signage and blazing of trails. He continued that his next item of importance would be the installation of kiosks that ties into the Educational aspect. The kiosks can highlight the ecological reserves, provide maps of the area, and provide information of the area to educate the ecological aspects of Greater Goose Pond. Chair Haynes stated another item of importance is the maintenance of existing trails, with the question of creating a trail maintenance program, which could include, the removal of trails, having a moratorium on more trails, or having members of the community volunteer their time.

Chair Haynes continued that NEMBA sent their items of importance via an email. Their top priority was bridge maintenance and repair, specifically Lower Bitten. Next, to include trail map at all kiosk and to improve the trail loop around the Pond to include a multi-use trail. As a side note, Chair Haynes mentioned a future discussion would need to be the multi-users aspect of the trails. He continued with the NEMBA suggestions to include trail signs, develop beginner friendly trails, and trail develop of the Ministers Lot that is right of the water tower and is City owned property. Another suggestion was assorted specific improvements and repairs that is the trail maintenance aspect. NEMBA stated in their email, that they have an ongoing priority project list that they work on as interest, energy and time allow.

Mr. Lamb marked the consistency of NEMBA's suggestions to that of Chair Haynes stated. Mr. Bill mentioned the confusion on the bridge names with Mr. Walker agreed as there are different names given. Mr. Bill stated this could be an important naming piece, and if the app All Trails should be not available to the bike users, only to the foot traffic. Chair Haynes agreed for the need for further discussion.

Mr. Walker stated that this was a confusing process for him. He stated that as he was listening to Chair Haynes outline his suggestions and that of NEMBA's, he realized the similarities in their top priorities, but also, their varied outlooks on them, which he mentioned the amount of discipline this exercise will take.

Mr. Walker itemized his priorities he outlined as Public Outreach and Education, Resource Management and Program Administration. For his first, he further divided this into Trails and Education. In terms with Education, he considers the work the Conservation Commission currently does with the social media posts, the public speaking engagements, etc., are a nexus of conformity. As for the Trails aspect, this would include both shared trails with hikers and bikers as well as trails specific for both. He mentioned handicap accessible trails which Chair Haynes stated there is language in the report for such trails from the new parking lot to the Pond. Mr. Walker continued that his suggestion would be to include heart healthy trails, such as outlined on the NEMBA map for biker usage. He stated he would suggest self-guided trails, which could be accessed via an app. He mentioned that the kiosks could also provide the same information as signage is vital, specifically at the Drummer Hill access point, the power lines and at all trail heads, not just the parking lot.

As for the Resource Management aspect, to include forest management, wildlife management, water quality management, ecological resource management, and invasive species management is a lot, and the subcommittee should begin to look at each, as each will take much time to accomplish. Mr. Walker mentioned an endowment fund for Program Administration as well as surveying the abutters of the Pond, though it was clarified by Mr. Lamb that there is a category of surveying trail users. Mr. Bill suggested an internship task to survey trail users over a specific amount of time.

Mr. Walker questioned if an endowment fund which Chair Haynes stated that is a topic of future discussion though he wasn't sure if there were funds available to be added. Mr. Walker stated his thought would be an endowment fund would be a good idea for the long term, to be able to spend the interest on the fund instead of having to raise money for specific projects. Mr. Lamb explained that the objective was if there were funds generated by any projects, such as timber harvesting, the money would be added to a fund specific for the Greater Goose Pond Forest Stewardship, not into the City's general fund with the outcome to have as a self-sufficient entity. Mr. Walker suggested the creation of a 'Friends' fund. Mr. Lamb explained that currently, on the recommendation of the Conservation Commission, the City Council created a Land Use Change Tax Fund, which is a non-lapsing fund that the City adds \$25,000 annually to use for land acquisition and studies, to be spend at the recommendation of the Conservation Commission. He suggested something similar could be created for this purpose with funds generated by timber sales, donations, etc. Such a fund would be easy enough to create with the Subcommittee agreed. Mr. Walker reiterated his top priorities would be the trails, user surveys from multiple sources, and a plan on how the Resource Management would be implemented. Mr. Lamb stated that staff has the capacity to implement a survey and the first survey is available online for review.

Chair Haynes stated that he didn't prioritize the Wildlife category, as he stated all of the work they will be doing will be to protect all aspects of the Greater Goose Pond Forest, which is a concern for everyone.

Mr. Bill stated his concern would be to create a user-friendly system for trail users to assist in navigating the forest. This trail marking system would also include kiosks. Another high priority Mr. Bill stated was train maintenance. He continued that he suggests to reach out to area focus groups to learn more of what would be needed for them to utilize the GGPF, specifically, led walks. Local focus groups could include the area schools, KSC, dog owners, etc. Mr. Bill stated he would suggest monitoring invasive species and ecological areas. He continued that he agreed with Chair Haynes on the protection of the GGPF. He also suggested the historical aspect of the GGPF, naming the cellar hole in particular, and how best to promote this to the public. He mentioned the prominent stone walls in the area and the use of the public to gather and appreciate that information. Lastly, he mentioned the long-term goals of possibly cutting down old growth trees and the need for consideration of climate variability and carbon storage.

Mr. Lamb stated that the Subcommittee members discuss these created lists at the next meeting, to map out a one to three year program goal. Mr. Bill asked how best to receive assistance with these proposed listed items. Mr. Lamb responded that this Subcommittee is tasked to choose specific items to accomplish to then aggregate the resources to completion. He continued that the Subcommittee members and NEMBA have chosen similar items of concern and staff will gather the information for the September meeting. Mr. Lamb left the meeting at 9:15 am.

Chair Haynes stated he would like to see the most common concerns, trail maintenance, kiosks and surveys, discussed at the next meeting. As the loop around the Pond is the largest and most used trail, it was agreed upon for the need for a maintenance schedule. Mr. Bill reminded the Subcommittee of potential grants, which may be available for funding their main targeted concerns. Chair Haynes mentioned the grants available through the Parks and Recreation Center discussed by Mr. Bohannon and the data needed to complete the grants. He continued that this is the beginning of that data collection.

Chair Haynes stated the next meeting would be to combine their top priorities then discuss these to outline the next steps. Mr. Walker asked for clarification on the earlier mention of meeting on a quarterly basis. Chair Haynes did state that yes, it was mentioned to move from monthly to quarterly meetings, but it was left as a vague option as it wasn't sure the work involved. He did say that meeting monthly works currently but he can predict meeting less frequent as there will be more work to accomplish in between meetings, such as conducting surveys. Mr. Bill stated that one meeting could be to have an onsite meeting with members of the public.

Chair Haynes requested the priority lists to be sent to the Subcommittee members and to Mr. Bohannon for their review. Discussion was had on meeting at the Rec Center for Mr. Bohannon's convenience as well as providing a virtual option for him to join the Subcommittee meetings. Ms. Marcou will research and discuss the option with Mr. Bohannon.

Mr. Bill mentioned the need of assistance in surveyed areas to protect ecological sites. Chair Haynes mentioned the County Extension Service who could be of some assistance with the survey. He also mentioned the need to protect the water quality and the wildlife. Though it is a daunting task, setting priorities will assist in guiding the Subcommittee.

Ms. Marcou asked if it would be of any interest for the Subcommittee to have a Google folder moving forward as a way to shared information. Chair Haynes asked for this to be discussed and explained at the next meeting. Mr. Bill asked if there would be any homework moving forward prior to next month. Chair Haynes asked for the lists to be emailed to everyone for review. He also mentioned an 'unofficial' survey that he's been talking to people he knows who use GGPF as a way to gather information.

4. Meeting day/time

Chair Haynes moved to this discussion prior to Mr. Lamb needing to leave, stating that Thursday morning times don't work well with NEMBA, who suggests either Tuesday or Friday meeting times. Mr. Walker stated that when school is back in session, the current Thursday meeting time won't work well for him as well. He stated that he is available most Friday mornings, except for the last one of the month. Mr. Bill stated that Tuesdays won't work for him either and Friday's work most of the time. Mr. Walker asked if meeting later in the day, with Mr. Lamb suggesting not meeting late on a Friday afternoon. Chair Haynes made the suggestion to meet on the second Friday of the month at 8:30 am. He did request the September meeting to meet on the third Friday, as he won't be available on the second. Chair Haynes thanked the members for their flexibility to enable NEMBA to attend the meetings, as it is vital to have them involved, as they are a huge participant of the Greater Goose Pond area.

5. Adjournment – Chair Haynes adjourned the meeting at 9:34 am. Next meeting, September 17, 2021