

HOPKINTON LAND TRUST
TRUSTEES PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES

November 27, 2023

Crandall House

PRESENT: Sarah Windsor *Chair*, Jason Parent, *Vice-Chair*, Carol Baker, *Secretary*, Mary Gibbons and Marilyn Grant, *Trustees*. Scott Bill Hirst, *Town Council liaison*. Tom Thompson and Michael Cervieri, *Associate Members*. Carl Rosen and Pete Ogle, *Public*.

ABSENT: Alana Russell, *Trustee*

- A. Call meeting to order** at 7:02 by Windsor with 6 trustees, and therefore a quorum, present.
- B. Approval of Previous meeting minutes:** Minutes of October 23 Public minutes were reviewed. Parent made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Grant, passed unanimously. There were no executive minutes in October.
- C. Accounting of Funds:** Grant reported the following: As of October 31, Citizens balance is \$29,141, Webster balance is \$59,406.

D. Chair and Member Reports

1. Chair Report:

- Potter Hill Dam presentation:

Carl Rosen and Pete Ogle reported on the proposed removal of Potter Hill Dam. Rosen lives on Pawcatuck River and is on the Hopkinton Dam Commission. Since 2021, the Committee has been working with the Westerly Town Council, who took ownership of Dam, and agreed not to take dam down in spring of 2022. Rosen worked in water industry for 30 years, not a scientist, Ogle is an engineer. Their motto is due no harm.

The current proposal before the Westerly Town Council is to lower level of dam by 3.5 feet; they hired Fuss & O'Neill, an engineering firm, to study effect of lowering/removing the dam. Rosen and Ogle have read the entire 350-page report from F&O and disagree with the findings of the report. They believe lowering the river will drastically affect wetlands upriver, including our property, Comolli and Grills preserve, and cause permanent and devastating damage to the river. They stated that more money is available if level of water is dropped and that previous Westerly Town Council approved removal at full height. The new Town Council wants to consider other options to have more \$\$ available for mill remediation. Ogle and Rosen would like to see the dam removed but maintain full height of the river, as was done at the Kenyon and Bradford dams. They are asking for a letter of support from us to Hopkinton Town Council.

Hirst stated his concern is that Hopkinton Town Council has not been kept in the loop and not been part of the discussions as Hopkinton taxpayers are affected as well. There will be a public hearing December 6 at 6 PM at Ashaway School presented by Westerly Town Council and Fuss and O'Neill. Discussion ensued. Windsor suggested that we all attend Dec 6 meeting to get more information, then we can discuss further at December meeting. All agreed this was a wise course and thanked Ogle and Rosen for discussing this with us.

Ogle and Rosen leave at 7:45

- Bond Meeting Update

Windsor reported that Parent, Windsor and Grant met with Brian Rosso, Town Manager, and Liz Monti, Director of Finance on October 24. Parent began with the presentation, and requesting a \$2 million bond for Open Space protection. Meeting was not very encouraging. Neither Rosso or Monti were interested in hearing about how OS bonds save money, they were more interested in discussing all the costs of the Town has paying back the previous bonds. And yet, we can't fulfill our mission without funds. Bottom line is there is no good time for a bond. Parent reported that Rosso suggested waiting 1-2 years when some bonds will be paid for, as the Town don't like to increase bond interest and suggested \$1 Million bond. Major issue is limit of 4% increase, which includes debt service, for Town budget. Hirst says he'll talk with Mike Geery, Town Council president, get us on the Town Council agenda so we can make a case to them and get their support. Hirst says he supports us having the populace make the decision. Rosso also asked if we had a particular piece of property in mind, which could be helpful in obtaining public support. We do have several properties in mind, but do not want to discuss specifics at this point.

2. Funding and Grants: Beaver Flood Trail:

- Windsor reported we sent in brief report as required as to the grant status. Windsor is in discussion with Lisa McGreavey from RIDEM, with regard to any engineering changes not exceeding the grant funds available. At this point, estimates are that it will be under the grant amount.

3. Subcommittees:

- Advocacy: Brushy Brook/Solar Projects: Johnson reported on the following
 - Comolli: Preliminary application. Joelle Rocha, Comolli lawyer was missing some info, will come back on December 13 agenda. Solar project has new engineer.

4. Friends/HLT:

- Pelloni – Final map corrections: Parent sent corrections to Ryan Corvette, waiting to hear back about final map.
- Winter bond and Spring Events:
 - Russell reported the following via email: Ashaway Free Library community room is available as space for our winter event with David Gregg from RINHS. Heather from the library is happy to host us and provided the paperwork necessary to make the reservation. The room has a maximum capacity of 50 people, but is most comfortable with a max of 30 people. There is a projector for powerpoint presentations. Refreshments are permitted, but must be cleared with the library first. Gregg gave Russell an idea of his availability this winter. The library is only open late on Tuesday through Thursday, so with David's schedule and the library schedule considered, here are the available dates for January and February: Jan 10-11, Jan 16-18, Jan 23-25, Jan 30, Feb 1, Feb 6-8, Feb 14 &15, Feb 20, Feb 27 & 29.

5. Land Management and Stewardship:

- Beaver Flood Trail: Beavers and DEM approval/engineering. Gibbons reported that the management plan prohibits hunting on the property, the request by a member of the public for access to the property to trap beaver will be denied.

Grant shared an email from Marc Doherty who is reviewing the project from us. He revisited the Kenyon Crossings property on 11/17 and was able to find and follow the Beaver Flood Trail from Bob Miner's gate to what I will call the south side of the proposed bridge site. I flagged the start of the trail and the start of the boardwalk on the south side, so both sides of the proposed bridge should be marked now. He would like to take one more day to explore and map the perimeter of the beaver impoundment and take another measurement of the boardwalk site. No word yet from him on his costs.

- Mowing expenses: Received a bill from mower which was more than we had expected, they did more mowings than we had requested. We will pay the bill but will express to the contractor the need for better communication in the future.
- James Farm violation: Windsor reported that the Town Building and Zoning contacted us regarding violations on Barry James farm as we have easement on the property. Violation was regarding someone living on a trailer on the property, which is prohibited. Thompson reported that Barry James Sr called Thompson in advance, suggested that the violation was called in by a family member with a grudge. Town enforcement officer checked it out and reported that there was no violation.

Hirst leaves at 8:42 pm

E. Old Business:

Comolli Update: See notes above

F. New Business: None

G. Public Forum / Trustees Forum: None

H. Executive Session [pursuant to RI Gen. Law Ch.46 42-46-5a (5)]. At 8:45 PM, Johnson moved that we go into executive session, pursuant to R.I.G.L. 42-46-5 (a)(5), to discuss potential land acquisitions. Parent seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous vote.

Return from Executive Session 9:12 pm

I. Adjourn: 9:13 pm

Respectfully Submitted,

Carol Baker, Secretary