

APPROVED MINUTES

Town of Concord Estabrook Woods Access Study Committee August 18, 2016

Members Present: Sally Schnitzer
Polly Reeve
Jeff Adams
Justin King
Bonnie Pohlig
Neil Rasmussen
Kathy Angell
Lisa Pohl

Also Present: Nick D'Arbeloff (Carlisle liaison, non-voting)
Jane Hotchkiss (Select Board liaison)

Public Present: Paul Jameson
Nancy Cowan
Bob Schulman
David Santomenna, Trustees of Reservations
Katie Pohlig

Sally Schnitzer called the meeting to order at 7:00 AM.

- 1. Review and approval of minutes for August 4, 2016 meeting:** The committee reviewed the draft minutes for the previous meeting, and suggestions for amendments from Neil Rasmussen. It was moved, seconded, and unanimously voted to approve the minutes as amended.
- 2. Correspondence:** Sally noted that three pieces of correspondence had been received since the last meeting, from Paul Jameson, Peter Gifford, and Marcie Berkley, and that they had been distributed to the committee prior to the meeting.
- 3. Administrative:** Sally introduced Delia Kaye, Concord Natural Resources Director, who joined the meeting to provide her perspective on access at Town land.

Sally expressed some concern over meeting the timeframe the committee originally established for completing our assignment and holding a public hearing. There may

be a need to meet for a longer period of time soon, and we will create a Doodle poll to establish members' availability. Neil suggested establishing a timeline to set milestones that we must meet to stay on track.

Several items had been sent to committee members in advance of the meeting: Neil Rasmussen's "Perspective of a Landowner" document, surveys prepared by the CPW, relevant deeds and plot plans, and draft rules and regulations for posting at access points.

4. Moving toward proposed solutions

- **Parking inventory:** Jeff Adams expressed appreciation to the Department of Public Works for completing the survey of existing and potential parking at four access points. The surveys will be used as a baseline and the subgroup will inspect each area visually to confirm findings. There were questions raised about the accuracy of the Estabrook Road survey, which seemed to show fewer spots than are currently being used. At Punkatasset, notes from CPW indicated that there is an application under review for moving a driveway that would eliminate two of the 14 informal surveyed existing spots. In addition, CPW believes that four of these spots should be removed because they are too narrow. Monument Farm has the potential for 10 or more spaces along the shoulder of the road along the conservation land property line, and Lowell Road can accommodate 16 cars in the wide shoulder by Chamberlin Woods, according to CPW.

The question of whether the report should document parking spaces in Carlisle was raised. Nick D'Arbeloff felt that Carlisle would appreciate being included, and will ask Carlisle's town manager. He will forward correspondence from Wayne Davis to Jeff Adams.

Jeff indicated that the subgroup would try to take the DPW data, do some field testing, and produce the data in a way that might be helpful for the committee. They will also try to identify issues about emergency vehicular access. Sally asked the subgroup to consider the summary (prepared by NRC staff) of parking spaces currently provided at town conservation land and see if there is anything that can be learned about appropriate levels of parking.

- **Review of access point worksheets, drafts prepared by Sally**
Sally had prepared new versions of the PRELIMINARY worksheets for each of the four access points in Concord where the public currently has right to access. Copies of deeds, maps, and other relevant documents were also circulated.

There were no additional comments on the Lowell Road worksheet as circulated to the Committee based on last week's discussion.

The Committee turned to Punkatasset.

Punkatasset: Delia Kaye provided an overview of NRC's management of Punkatasset.

When asked about the history and possibility of creating a lot on Town land, she felt that having a parking lot out of sight of the road would be an attractive nuisance and a liability. The NRC looked at this possibility in the 1970s and ultimately voted to allow 15-20 spaces near Hutchins Pond, but these were never built. It is unclear what the status of this vote would be today.

David Santomenna of the Trustees of Reservations mentioned that the Punkatasset town property is now under a conservation restriction held by TTOR and parking may not be permitted – the CR needs to be reviewed. He also told the committee that he was going to be meeting with TTOR's property manager to assess the potential for parking on the Apthorp Land.

Several committee members noted that because Punkatasset is the only Town land in the Concord portion of the Woods, the Town has a higher obligation to provide safe and adequate parking here than at other points.

Delia felt that replacing on-street parking on Monument Street with off-street parking would be positive from a safety perspective. She felt that the impact on the Woods would not be negative if the total number of spaces stays relative consistent with current availability. It is unclear if a new lot would trigger ADA compliance. Delia noted that only one parcel of town conservation land – Harrington Park – has a "hidden" parking area.

A discussion about what to use as the baseline number of parking spaces followed, with several members asserting that because of parking restrictions on Estabrook Road the total number of spaces have been reduced by 20 or more from previous levels. Neil Rasmussen commented that until recent years, except for a handful of days, these spots were never used. He asserted that daily demand has increased dramatically, and reiterated that the temporary restrictions have made a positive difference and that the neighbors intend to close access if parking is expanded from current levels.

At this point an alarm went off in the building, interrupting the conversation.

When the discussion resumed, several points were made:

- Just because a road isn't posted "No Parking" doesn't mean it is safe or appropriate to park on it.
- The increase in demand at Estabrook Road is largely related to dog usage. It is in danger of becoming a dog park. Issue of dogs needs to be addressed.
- The internet has caused interest in visiting the Woods to explode. We need to control those things that we can control, and promotion on the internet is probably not one of them.
- We need to return to the fundamental question of whether to recommend adding parking spaces or keeping the current amount of parking overall.
- The "value" of the Woods rises and falls depending on weather, season, and time of day. There used to be enough parking on Estabrook Road to meet demand on peak days. Need to be clear that useful parking spaces have been eliminated with the temporary parking restrictions.

Monument Farm: Sally asked Delia to provide an overview of the conservation land at Monument Farm. In 1992 this land was deeded to the Town as part of a subdivision. The Town Land provides access from Monument Farm Road to Harvard owned land via a narrow strip of land on the southern boundary of Monument Farm subdivision, on which there is now a trail. The town-owned conservation land also extends as a 50 foot wide buffer along the western boundary of the subdivision and directly abutting Harvard land and Two Rod Road. There is also a deeded 20' trail easement on private land that extends from the west end of the Road to Two Rod Road.

Neil noted that there is currently an Estabrook Woods Council sign at this trail, as well as a "Private" sign that should not be there. Delia told us that there are two trails on the Town land, one along the 10' strip at the southern boundary, and another created by neighbors. The parking proposed by CPW would be near this existing trail. Sally mentioned that she was on the Planning Board at the time the Monument Farm subdivision was approved, and that the conservation land was secured in response to increasing pressure on Estabrook Woods and to create a meaningful buffer and provide access. Delia noted that at the current time the Natural Resources department manages this land minimally, but that they are prepared to increase their management as necessary.

A discussion followed about the purpose of adding parking spaces at Monument Farm. Points made included:

- While Monument Farm might not be most people's first choice for parking, it would provide useful overflow parking on peak days.
- If we construct an off-street lot near Punkatasset, would it be better to add more spots there in order to concentrate activity there, rather than introduce another access point?
- Adding parking at Punkatasset would not eliminate the need to distribute parking around the Woods.
- It might be better to design parking at Punkatasset with the intent of dealing with most of the pressure.
- We need to decide on our approach. Do we advocate for distributing parking in multiple points, or concentrating it in one or more points? This is a fundamental question we must answer.
- Some kind of low-key signage indicating parking at Monument Farm would be appropriate, but should not "promote" this as a key access point to the Woods.

Estabrook Road: We will begin our next meeting with a review of the Estabrook Road access point and proposed solutions for that location.

- **Sticker Parking:** This solution has been suggested several times, and we will return to it at our next meeting.
- **Rules and Regulations:** The group working on rules and regulations sent out proposed regulations for posting at each entrance in advance of the meeting for committee comment. Feedback included:
 - The clause beginning "Failure to follow" is negative and jarring
 - Consider removing some bullets
 - Change "sunrise to sunset" to "dawn to dusk"

5. Public Comment

- Katie Pohlig – Suggested that users should be required to promise to follow all rules and respect the land and the kind owners who enable access. If we issued permits, and people upheld their obligations, maybe we could expand parking a little.

- Bob Schulman – Would recommend limiting dog walkers to three, not two, dogs per person. Is there a possibility for a public webcam on Estabrook Road so that users could see in advance if there are parking spaces available? Could public access to the Woods be obtained through eminent domain?
- Paul Jameson – Believes that private landowners should not be able to limit public access and finds parking restrictions on Estabrook Road offensive.
- Sally reminded the committee and the public that there is a disagreement about whether the Town abandoned rights to the public way in 1932, and that the legal status is unclear.
- Nancy Cowan – sought clarification about whether parking was permitted on Monument Farm Road. Delia confirmed that although it is a private way, all general uses of a public way, including parking, are permitted.

6. Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 8:34.