

APPROVED MINUTES PUBLIC HEARING

Town of Concord
Estabrook Woods Access Study Committee
Meeting
June 13, 2016
Town House Second Floor Hearing Room

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

Also Present: Nick D'Arbeloff (Carlisle liaison)

Sally Schnitzer called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. She welcomed all members of the public, and informed those attending that the meeting was being recorded and broadcast live by CCTV.

The co-chairs opened the meeting by presenting an overview of the reasons the Committee was created, the issues it is charged with studying, and the challenges it will seek to resolve. They provided background on the history of land conservation in the Estabrook Woods and presented various maps illustrating the complex pattern of ownership of and public access to the properties that together comprise the Woods. They reported that the process to date has led to many helpful suggestions that fall into four "buckets:"

- Parking
- Communications
- Visitors and visitor behavior, and the rules that govern these
- Legal issues, which by and large fall outside the committee's purview.

They closed by welcoming further suggestions and comments from the public, and stated the Committee's goal of presenting recommendations to the Select Board by the end of October, preceded by a second public hearing at which their report will be presented in draft form for further public comment.

Each member of the Committee was asked to introduce himself or herself. Then the public was invited to share their thoughts, observations, and recommendations.

SPEAKERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Russell Robb, Monument Street: Could there be a parking lot created on Town-owned land by the access to Punkatasset? Could there be a small dirt parking lot created at the Chamberlin Woods entrance?

Abby White, 851 Monument Street: She stated that she had moved to a house at the entrance to Punkatasset in September. She feels the situation there is dangerous, "an accident waiting to happen." She observes that limiting parking at Estabrook Road has increased activity at Punkatasset, and had created a dangerous situation there. Cars go fast around the bend, cyclists use the road heavily, sight lines are limited.

Susannah Kay, 366 Estabrook Road: Agrees that Lowell Road and Monument Street roadside parking is dangerous. She presented a copy of the Punkatasset deed restriction showing that a parking lot was provided for on this land.

Wayne Davis, Carlisle, Vice President of the Carlisle Conservation Foundation and Land Trust, and member of the Conservation Restriction Advisory Committee. Thanked the committee for including Carlisle in the process and Nick D'Arbleoff for serving on the Committee. Thanked landowners in the Estabrook Woods for their generosity in providing access. He uses the Woods frequently and treasures them. They are a shared resource, and he urges the committee to continue to work with sensitivity to the needs of both towns as well as private landowners.

Marcie Berkley, 41 Monument Street: She stated that there is a safety concern with funneling more cars to Monument Street and Lowell Road, as well as a public health concern. She feels that these two access points, with narrower trails and more leaf litter, may pose a greater risk of Lyme Disease. Need to protect the rights of abutters and the public.

Karen Kirsten, 280 Estabrook Road: There is an access point at Monument Farms, and suggests making this access to the Woods more visible.

Luis Berrizbeitia, Lexington Road: Has walked in Estabrook Woods for 30 years, nearly daily, and considers them an essential resource for the people of Concord. He reminds the committee about its charge to preserve access to the Woods. Access may need to be modified, but the Committee's work should not result in a reduction of access. Outrageous and inappropriate behavior created the conflicts we have witnessed, but these incidents should not lead to shutting down public access to the Woods. Goal should be to guarantee permanent and formalized access, and he urges the committee to keep this in mind.

Michael McAteer 1615 Lowell Road: Spends a lot of time in the Woods and hopes that access is not restricted. The woods are not just for Concord and Carlisle. We need to work together to steward this extraordinary resource. Don't let the bad behavior of a few compromise the access of others. Provide guidelines for use.

Lisette Zinner, 31 Derby Street: The Estabrook Woods is her "church." She maintains the bench and book by the pond, and this illustrates how many people use and enjoy the Woods. She asked about the legal status of the Estabrook Road access to the Woods.

Chris Whelan, Town Manager, Main Street: responded to the question posed. Records show the Town abandoned the unpaved portion of the road long ago. Generally, this means that ownership is assumed by abutters. The town is reviewing the situation.

Candace Nelson, 321 Hayward Mill Road: Asked the Committee to inventory how many parking spaces are currently available to provide access to Estabrook Woods. Once the parking restrictions on Estabrook Road have been lifted, she recommends equalizing parking at all available access points to reduce the pressure on any one area.

Rusty Robb, Monument Street: Asked Chris Whelan, Town Manager, about the feasibility of creating a parking lot at Punkatasset.

Chris Whelan, Town Manager, Main Street: Responded that the Police Chief may have some concerns about a lot at this location if it can't be monitored from the road.

Eric Green, 52 Devens Street: Thanks the Committee for its work. He loves Estabrook Woods and uses the land frequently, on foot, horseback, bike, skis, with and without a dog. None of us made the Woods, and we are fortunate to have the privilege of enjoying this treasure. He urged the committee to do everything possible to preserve access and keep the Woods available for everyone. Do not make it a locked and gated resource. Safety issues and behavior issues should be easily addressed. He also suggested reducing the speed limit at Punkatasset.

Susannah Kay, 366 Estabrook Road: Suggested looking to the National Parks for solutions. At many of them you need a ticket to enter. Hopes that the committee identifies places for safe, off-street parking, and comes up with a solution for dealing with dog waste. Keep in mind that this land was largely set aside for research, and foot traffic is negatively affecting conservation values.

Anna Winter, 393 Estabrook Road: Noted that there is precedent for a parking area at Punkatasset, as she believes there was a lot there in the 1980s, off of Monument Street.

Sally Schnitzer, Lowell Road: Noted that there were several Estabrook Woods landowners present at the hearing, and thanked them for generously granting access and providing stewardship for the Woods.

Candace Nelson, 321 Hayward Mill Road: Dog etiquette is a big issue, and we as a town need to engage in a public dialogue around acceptable dog behavior. She appreciates the graciousness of the signs that have been installed at Estabrook Road access.

Penny Rodday, 33 Pond View Lane: For 36 years, has been walking in Estabrook Woods twice a day, and in all that time she has witnessed only two unfortunate incidents. Estabrook Woods is a magical place. "Better than church." Hopes that the Woods will remain open to all. They are a place of peace and calm in a crazy world. The times when the access is very crowded are mostly limited to excellent ski days, high season for mushroom hunters, and orienteering events. Have the parking signs on Estabrook Road helped with parking problems? We need to acknowledge that parking is an issue and come up with reasonable and effective parking management solutions.

Marcie Berkley, 41 Monument Street: Took responsibility for a recent orienteering meet and realized it was "too much." They will not do this again, and she feels that groups like this will self-police if they understand what is appropriate for this resource. She suggested creating a "Friends" group for Estabrook Woods which could raise money, give time, help to steward and communicate – a mechanism for people to volunteer.

Eric Green, 52 Devens Street: Questioned whether an additional parking lot is a good idea, as it will certainly attract more cars. People should be encouraged to walk to Estabrook Woods. He urged the committee to be very careful in considering additional parking.

Abby White, 851 Monument Street: Spreading out the access makes sense to keep the Woods peaceful and quiet. Cautioned that there is a sharp turn at the entrance to Punkatasset, and a lot there would require cars to enter Monument Street at a very dangerous place.

Bob Kusik, 119 Ministerial Drive: Consider a "bike share" program between Minuteman National Historical Park and Estabrook Woods.

Bob Shulman, 680 Main Street: Having a police car at the entrance to the Woods is not welcoming. Since parking restrictions went into place, he has stopped going and goes to Mt. Misery instead. He is concerned about conflicts between horses and dogs, and horses and bikes. If you have a dog you couldn't use a bike share.

Jeff Parker, 1337 Sudbury Road: Access is expensive. These properties were burdened with this access when abutters purchased their property.

Win Davis, Carlisle: Encourages the committee to focus on education. Most people have no idea about the nature of access in the Woods, and the differences between a "public park" and the ownership and access realities of Estabrook Woods. Kiosks at key entry points could inform the public, and acknowledge the generosity of private landowners. Being welcoming should not mean complete unfettered access, which would ruin the resource we are trying to protect.

Judy Hadley, 32 Hugh Cargill Road: Since 1974, has been riding a horse in the Woods. Has almost never had a problem with a dog. People are generally very conscientious. Since parking restrictions have gone into effect, people are even more cautious about safety.

Lyn Lemere, Carlisle: Stressed the difference between Estabrook Woods and a state park. She urged the committee to publicize the Woods' purpose of study, research, habitat protection. Use this opportunity to build respect and appreciation. Compliments the committee on its hard and thoughtful work.

Anna Winter, 393 Estabrook Road: Thanked the committee and the police. The recent signs have been very helpful. There are 11 parking spaces on Estabrook Road, and generally there are plenty available. With signage in place, people are generally respectful and understand expectations.

Luis Berrizbeitia, Lexington Road: Commented that since the parking restrictions went into effect, more people are leaving dog waste bags at the entrance to the Woods.

Sally Schnitzer thanked the public for their comments and suggestions. The hearing was adjourned at 8:20 PM.

Attached:

Presentation given by the Chairs.

Power Point Slides

Sign in Sheets

Deed to Punkatasset, provided by Dr. Kay