



Town of Ashland

MASSACHUSETTS

Town Forest Committee Minutes

January 26, 2022, 7:00 PM

Members Present: Brian Forestal, Mike Jones, Brian McGrattan, Cathy Rooney, Rob St. Germain, Cara Hulme, Mike Morrissey

Members Absent: None

Public Present: None

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 PM.

1. Approval of Minutes of January 12, 2022

The Ashland Town Forest Committee (ATFC) reviewed and amended the meeting minutes of January 12, 2022. A motion was made to approve the amended meeting minutes and seconded. Approved 5-0-0.

2. Expense submittals (if any)

Not discussed.

3. Planning 1 - Public programs for 2022

Fairy House Event:

Ms. Hulme outlined a potential event for young children, to decorate about 20 Fairy Houses and place them on the White Trail (Bay Circuit Trail) between the shed and the bungalow. The proposed dates are April 23, the day after earth day, or May 7. There are multiple aspects of this event: building the houses, placing the houses in the forest and walking through the forest to see other houses.

The ATFC discuss potential materials, which need to be biodegradable and would be left in the forest to break down. Natural materials are: wood, string, stone, leaves, flowers, moss, shells, pine cones, etc. No plastic, glass or metal. The ATFC does not want people taking items out of the forest, it was suggested the ATFC can collect materials for participants to use. The ATFC should inform the participants not to bring in invasive plants or plants with berries.

The ATFC discussed whether to solicit businesses to see if they wanted to build a fairy house and donate to the ATF? The ATFC has a method to manage donations. The consensus was not to solicit businesses for the first of what could be an annual event.

A motion was made to approve the project, with Mrs. Hulme to organize a fairy house event, and this was seconded. The motion passed 5-0-0.

New England Forests Event – let by Mr. Tom Wessels

Ms. Rooney indicated the event cost went up from \$1,050 to \$1,240 including travel.

Ms. Rooney and Mr. St. Germain went the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) looking funding for the event, \$1,240. Unfortunately, the CPC was unable to fund this event. Mr. St. Germain talked to the Town Manager about other funding options. Mr. St. Germain is also looking for additional funding from an Ashland Business Association member. There is an anonymous sponsor willing to fund the event to prevent canceling Mr. Wessels, but the ATFC needs to get the actual funding to get Mr. Wessels scheduled. The ATFC again discussed charging participants to cover part of the fee.

Mr. St. Germain asked Mr. Morrissey to read the funding decision from the January 12 meeting minutes:

“Mr. Morrissey made a motion to spend \$1,050 to hire Mr. Wessels for a community talk and ATF walk, and the ATFC tries to get attendees to cover 50% of the costs. Ms. Rooney moved the motion. Mr. St. Germain amended the motion to cancel Mr. Wessels if we don’t get grant money for at least 50% of the cost. Mr. McGrattan seconded the amendment. Ms. Rooney will look into a drop dead date to cancel Mr. Wessels. Mr. St. Germain will try to get BAA grant money, and if BAA money is unavailable, Ms. Rooney will try to for CPC grant money. The amendment was approved 7-0-0.”

The ATFC agreed to continue to pursue grant funding, and potentially raise half the funds from attendees \$620.

Mr. McGrattan said, at this time, there is no money budgeted for this event.

Other Public Programs

Mr. St. Germain presented a list of other potential programs

- Salem End Cave Walk: Mr. St. Germain volunteered to lead this.
- Plant ID Walk: Ms. Rooney volunteered to lead this.
- “Forest for All” walk: Ms. Rooney volunteered to lead this walk for underserved populations.
- Mountain Biking Rides: Mr. Forestal volunteered to lead these.
- Invasive Plant Walk: Mr. Jones volunteered to lead this.
- Native American Stone Works: Ms. Rooney and Mr. St. Germain have a contact that could lead this program and will reach out to him.
- Pollinator & Photography program at the Rain Garden: Ms. Rooney and Mr. Jones volunteered to lead this program. The pictures can be added to the ATF Facebook page. Ms. Rooney knows a person that may be able to lead a photography workshop. Ms. Rooney needs to check the plants in the rain garden to see if any are the specific food for several endangered local species of bees.
- Tree planting workshop: Mr. Jones volunteered to lead this program.
- Quarry walk: Mr. Jones volunteered to lead this program.
- Other options discussed
 - Cross Country Skiing Program
 - Winter Plant ID: Ms. Rooney volunteered to lead this program.
 - Geologist Walk

The ATFC discussed how to publicize these events

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- Mr. Forestal will publicize the events on the ATF Facebook page.
- Mr. St. Germain will send a message to the ATF Friends Of the Forest list
- Ms. Rooney suggested using other lists such as the Open Space Committee list.

There was discussion about how many programs to run a year, 6, 10, 12, and when to run them, Saturday or Sunday. No decisions were made. Mr. Forestal suggested we need an SOP for ATF Public Events, to answer questions such as:

- How many programs will the ATFC run per year?
- How is the ATFC controlling program capacity, necessary?
- How is the ATFC raising funds for the program, if necessary?

Mr. St. Germain will send around a calendar to the ATFC. Volunteer leaders were asked to

- Pick a date for their event
- Write a brief description of the event
- Indicate whether the event has a capacity limit, or an age limit.

The ATFC briefly discussed how to manage capacity limits, but no decisions were made.

4. Projects Discussion

Mr. St. Germain presented an ATF Maintenance Project List and was interested in getting volunteer leaders.

- Bi-Monthly UTV Maintenance: Mr. Jones has agreed to perform the bi-monthly UTV maintenance including checking the batteries, checking tire pressure, etc.
- Annual UTV Maintenance: Mr. St. Germain said the DPW offered to service the vehicle, but it would need to be done in August, when the DPW has capacity. The other option was to use the Dealer. Several members expressed using the DPW.
- White Trail Surface Improvements: Mr. St. Germain said there were ruts, erosion and water issues. Mr. St. Germain suggested to fill in the ruts, but not deal with the water issues at this point. Mr. St. Germain volunteered to lead this project, and Mr. McGrattan also volunteered to help. The ATFC approved filling in the ruts on the White Trail.
- Trail brush back for UTV passage: The ATFC approved this project. Areas discussed were:
 - Between the White Trail & Purple Trail Junction #16 and Bridge #3
 - Red Trail between #27 and #28
- Shed Leaks: Mr. Forestal said one leak is resolved, and he will work on the second leak.
- Shed Roof: Mr. Forestal volunteered to use his leaf blower to clear off the roof as needed throughout the year.
- Cleanup Woods and area around the Shed and Winter St Main Parking Lot: Mr. Forestal suggested some of the materials could be mulched, and larger materials could be chopped into smaller pieces. The ATFC approved this project.
- Winter St. Large Lot Maintenance-Pot Holes. Mr. St. Germain will continue to fill in the pot holes.

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- Winter St. Large Lot Maintenance-Coating: Mr. St. Germain suggested the Winter St. Large Lot could use a stone coating. Ms. Rooney suggested putting stone down during mud season (early March), so it will be ground in by the next winter's plowing season. Mr. St. Germain will talk to the DPW about a stone coating, and potentially spreading and rolling the stone. The ATFC also discussed the DPW putting the stone down in small piles that volunteers could rake out.
- Winter St. Small Lot Erosion: This lot needs some stone to fill in the ruts and control erosion. Mr. St. Germain suggested 2-3 UTV loads. Mr. St. Germain will check with the DPW about getting some stone dropped in this lot during mud season.
- Oregon St Parking Lot: Mr. Forestal will use his leaf blower to clear the leaves from the parking lot.
- Oak St. Parking Lot: Mr. St. Germain and Ms. Hulme will repair the medallion on the parking spot affected by the project to connect the rain garden to the storm water system.
- Bridge Wing Walls: Mr. McGrattan and Mr. Morrissey volunteered to add more stone to the bridge wing walls. Mr. St. Germain to identify the bridges.
- Map Posts: There are several map posts requiring maps. Mr. St. Germain will install the maps when they are available.
- The white trail from Oregon Road: Needs some gravel on the ramps. Mr. St. Germain will get this completed. If there is extra stone, Mr. St. Germain will see if the DPW can move the excess to the Winter St. lot or spread it out at the Oregon St. lot.
- AMC Boardwalk: The south end of the boardwalk ends about 5-6 feet from a tree, which can be hazardous to bikers. Mr. Forestal suggested the ATFC consider moving the end the boardwalk. ATFC members will walk the trail and vote on this at a future meeting.
- Remaining stone from Boy Scout Projects: Mr. St. Germain will use this on upcoming spring projects.
- Replace the Red Trail Lock near Lincoln St: Mr. Forestal removed the damaged lock. Mr. St. German will replace it with a new lock from inventory.
- Periodic Culvert Maintenance: (between #27 & #28): Mr. Morrissey volunteered. Mr. McGrattan will instruct Mr. Morrissey and how to clear the culverts. Planned for spring, Mr. Morrissey to pick a date.
- Culvert Replacement near #23: The current culverts are 6" and should be replaced with 10" culverts. Mr. St. Germain has met with the DPW about this project in the past. Ms. Rooney suggests that the ATFC has to go to Conservation Commission for approval. Mr. St. Germain will ask the DPW if that have maintenance clearance from the Conservation Commission for existing culverts.
- Ms. Rooney suggested we should submit a maintenance Notice of Intent (NOI) with the Conservation Committee, which will cover the ATFC for three (3) years for certain projects. Before the NOI expires the ATFC would file for an extension and continue to do this every three (3) years, into the future. If the NOI is accepted the Conservation Committee will grant an Order of Conditions (OOC) to work on the project.
- On the Red Trail the culvert just beyond #32 is partially blocked. The splash rocks are blocking the leaves and as a result the culvert is half full of leaves on the outlet end. Mr. St. Germain will try to clean this out. Mr. Forestal also suggested the ATFC adjust the splash rocks to reduce the chance of trapping leaves.
- Periodic Culvert Maintenance (closest to the fire hydrant): Mentioned but not discussed.

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- **Parking Lot Snow Removal:** Mr. Forestal indicated there were complaints on Facebook about clearing snow from the Winter Street Lot. The lot was icy, not plowed, etc. Ms. Rooney also suggested they not dump the scrapings over the rock wall, but put them in an end parking spot, so the ATFC can recover any stone. Mr. St. Germain will discuss this with the DPW, but the Winter Street Large Lot is lower priority on the snow clearing list, after roads and some sidewalks. The Oregon Road Lot and the Winter St Small Lot are not plowed in the winter, and the Oak St Lot is plowed by the Apartment complex owner by agreement.

5. Planning 2 – North Trail approval discussion

Not discussed.

6. Planning 3 – Trail redesignations

Not discussed.

7. Old business: Comments and Questions on updates and ongoing projects

Not discussed.

8. New Business & Member prerogative

Not discussed.

Motion to Adjourn

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting and was seconded. Approved by a 5-0-0 vote.

The meeting adjourned at 8:56 pm.

Future Meeting Dates: February 9, February 23, March 9, March 23