



# Town of Ashland

## M A S S A C H U S E T T S

### Town Forest Committee Minutes

May 11, 2022, 7:00 PM

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

Members Absent: Cara Hulme

Public Present: Philip Benjamin, Certified Forester  
David Babik, Boston Mycological Club  
Venkat Kakula

#### Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM.

#### 1. Forest Stewardship Plans, Phil Benjamin

Mr. Benjamin drafted supplemental stewardship plans for the Nicolo and Collins properties. Mr. Benjamin discussed or recommended:

- The properties have more trees per acre, than is recommended. This is shown by the lack of light on the forest floor. Mr. Benjamin recommended favoring the strongest individuals of each species and cull the weaker trees.
- Reviewed the map with 6 red dots indicating areas for additional planting or deer exclosures. These areas have natural canopy openings, which provides sunlight to the forest floor, and are areas of blowdowns or insect damage.
- Some thinning of the trees. This doesn't have to be removing the tree, the trees can be girdled. Tree girdling allows the tree to remain standing, slowly dying and releasing its carbon, while provide a nesting area for birds and other animals.
- Invasive species have made a foothold at the northern most portion of the Nicolo property, including Tree of Heaven (#4) and Bittersweet. There is also an old truck body in the area, which was possibly an old sandpit. Near #2 are two cellar holes, just north of the seasonal pond. There is a little bit of white pine in stand #2. There are a lot of younger trees in stand #1 with an uneven canopy, and this may have been due to tree harvesting 30-35 years ago.
- Ms. Rooney asked what it would cost to recommend which trees should be removed or girdled. Mr. Benjamin suggested this could be done in 4 to 8 hours or about \$300 to \$600.
- Mr. Kakula asked instead of removing the larger trees completely, can some of the branches be removed. Mr. Benjamin suggested this is possible, but on a case by case basis when looking the specific situation. There is no 'magic formula' to determine whether to cut, girdle or trim a tree other than looking at the situation and asking, "what will make the forest better in 40 or 50 years?"

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Mr. McGrattan asked why do some of the fallen oaks, have rotten centers? Mr. Benjamin suggested:

- Looking for woodpecker holes, as evidence of insect damage.
- In May 1977, there was a wet heavy snow that heavily damaged the oaks, which has resulted in future problems.
- Sometimes fire will damage the tree bark, which can impact younger trees.

Ms. Rooney asked what other organizations have been doing about deer browsing. Mr. Benjamin suggested the following options: hunting, deer exclosures, leaving tree debris on the ground to shield young trees, or building 'slash walls' made out of tree debris. 'Slash walls' are not recommended.

### **2. Approval of Meeting Minutes of April 27, 2022**

The Ashland Town Forest Committee (ATFC) reviewed and amended the meeting minutes of April 27, 2022. A motion was made to approve the amended meeting minutes and seconded.

The ATFC roll call vote was: Mr. Forestal: Aye, Mr. Jones: Aye, Mr. McGrattan: Aye, Ms. Rooney: Aye, Mr. St. Germain: Aye. This motion was approved 5-0-0.

### **3. Expense submittals & Accounting Report**

#### **Expense Submittals**

Mr. St. Germain submitted receipts and an expense report for \$613.20 for pole extenders for the burn area deer exclosures. Mr. St. Germain made a motion to pay Mr. St. Germain, with Mr. McGrattan seconding. The ATFC roll call vote was: Mr. Forestal: Aye, Mr. Jones: Aye, Mr. McGrattan: Aye, Ms. Rooney: Aye, Mr. St. Germain: Aye. The motion was approved 5-0-0, and Mr. McGrattan will submit the expense to the town for reimbursement.

Mr. Jones submitted receipts and an expense report for \$48.00 for 1.5 gallons of Agro Liquid Fertilizer. Mr. McGrattan said this comes out of the for DCR Implementation Grant Account. Mr. St. Germain made a motion to pay Mr. Jones. The ATFC roll call vote was: Mr. Forestal: Aye, Mr. Jones: Aye, Mr. McGrattan: Aye, Ms. Rooney: Aye, Mr. St. Germain: Aye. The motion was approved 5-0-0, and Mr. McGrattan will submit the expense to the town for reimbursement.

#### **Accounting Report**

Mr. McGrattan made a motion to pay Mr. Benjamin \$975 for the completed the Stewardship Plan for the Nicolo and Collins properties. The ATFC roll call vote was: Mr. Forestal: Aye, Mr. Jones: Aye, Mr. McGrattan: Aye, Ms. Rooney: Aye, Mr. St. Germain: Aye. The motion was approved 5-0-0.

Mr. McGrattan discussed a 25% match that the town owes on the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) grant. Mr. St. Germain made a motion to transfer \$799.68 from the Deer Exclosure portion of CPC Grant #4 to the Implementation Grant Account. The ATFC roll call vote was: Mr. Forestal: Aye, Mr. Jones: Aye, Mr. McGrattan: Aye, Ms. Rooney: Aye, Mr. St. Germain: Aye. The motion was approved 5-0-0. Mr. McGrattan will see Carol Bogdanovich, the Assistant to the Ashland Finance Director/Town Accountant Brittany Iacaponi, about transferring the funds between accounts.

Mr. McGrattan listed the following account balances:

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- \$164.63 in the DPW account.
- \$608.90 earmarked for Public Programs.

Mr. McGrattan asked Mr. Jones to research if he was reimbursed for chain saw chains and to let Mr. McGrattan know what he finds.

### 4. Remaining FY22 purchasing

Mr. St. Germain and Mr. Jones would like to purchase:

- A Cant Hook (Peavey) to help remove portions of fallen trees on ATF trails. Mr. Forestal recommended getting a Peavey with a stand. Mr. Jones will investigate whether to get the Peavey with a stand or not.
- A full size rock hammer (10 lb.) and a light rock hammer (3 or 5 lb.) to knock down the height of rocks on the trails reducing hazards to the ATFC buggy, particularly on the Blue Trail. Mr. Forestal and Ms. Rooney were not in favor of removing the tops of rocks and prefer adding stone to raise up the trail bed.
- A pair of scissors for the shed.

The funds to cover these purchases would deplete the DPW account, and the remainder would come out of the discretionary funds from the unrestricted funds account.

Mr. St. Germain made a motion to allocate \$200 for a Peavey potentially with a stand, two rock hammers and scissors, which Mr. McGrattan seconded. The ATFC roll call vote was: Mr. Jones: Aye, Mr. McGrattan: Aye, Mr. St. Germain: Aye. Mr. Forestal: No and Ms. Rooney: Abstained. This motion was approved 3-1-1.

Mr. Forestal informed Mr. McGrattan that he will file an expense report for about \$65.07 for materials for the buggy. Mr. McGrattan said this will also come out of the discretionary funds from the unrestricted funds account.

### 5. Pollinator garden

Mr. St. Germain informed the ATFC that Eversource created a Pollinator Garden on the SVT portion of the right-of-way last fall. Mr. St. Germain and the Eversource Vegetation Manager looked for section of ATF land to create a similar pollinator garden. The problem is access of equipment; Eversource cannot get the required material to any of the ATF right-of-way property with installing swamp mats and that makes the effort too costly.

Instead, Eversource has recommended creating a Pollinator Garden between the street and parking area of the Main Winter Street parking lot. This project will not cost the ATFC anything and will provide habitat for our vital insect population, which is in decline.

Ms. Rooney asked for a list of plants that could be put in the pollinator garden, because Eversource put in Butterfly Bush which is considered an invasive species by some groups. Mr. St. Germain said this will be removed and replaced with a better pollinator.

Mr. St. Germain made a motion that the ATFC, through a sub-committee of Mr. St. Germain, Ms. Rooney, and Mr. Jones, continue to discuss a pollinator garden near the Main Winter Street lot with Eversource, and to develop a plan for one or both sections. The ATFC roll call vote was: Mr. Forestal: Aye, Mr. Jones: Aye, Mr. McGrattan: Aye, Ms. Rooney: Aye, Mr. St. Germain: Aye. The motion was approved 5-0-0.

#### **6. Offer of Magnolia Tree gift**

Mr. McGrattan had been approached with an offer of a Magnolia Tree for the ATF, but he tabled this request, because the offer was withdrawn.

Mr. McGrattan recommended the ATFC develop a policy for gifts. Ms. Rooney agreed and asked that the ATFC put this on an agenda for near future ATFC meeting. Ms. Rooney mentioned the ATFC has been offered memorial benches several times in the past.

#### **7. Mushroom Walk Request**

David Babik from the Boston Mycological Club (BMC <https://bostonmycologicalclub.org/>) joined the meeting to express interest in holding a club walk the ATF. The BMC has about 1,000 members. The club will typically document the mushrooms that are found in the forest, and members have picked up trash that they encounter on their walks.

Mr. Babik outlined a typical BMC walk, where the BMC will split the group up, walk different trails in the forest, selecting one fruiting body from each fungi species they encounter, bring them back to a gathering area and try to identify them there. For those the BMC can't identify on the day of the walk, they will take them for further research and identification. The BMC will write up the information and share the data they collect with the stewards of the properties they walk.

On previous walks, Mr. Babik mentioned:

- The type of mushroom at the base of the tree can provide information on which tree will survive and for how long.
- There is one area in the ATF that contain a lot of Honey Mushrooms, an invasive mushroom.
- Mr. Babik has also seen Hen of the Woods mushrooms, which grow at the base of oak trees, and appear in the fall.

Mr. Babik suggested the BMC can get an insurance rider for their event, if required by the ATFC.

#### **ATFC Comments**

- Mr. Jones expressed interest in how the by-laws apply to the BMC walk and mushroom harvesting.
- Ms. Rooney expressed interest in the data the BMC would share, and the educational opportunity this presents the ATFC and Ashland.
- Mr. Forestal expressed interest in the BMC walk and sharing the information with the Ashland residents.
- Mr. McGrattan expressed gratitude to Mr. Babik and BMC for coming to the ATFC in advance and to share their interest and plans, vs. just walking the ATF harvesting mushrooms.

Mr. St. Germain made a motion to allow the BMC to walk the forest, which Ms. Rooney seconded. Mr. Jones suggested an amendment for a 3 year time limit and then withdrew it. Mr. St. Germain amended his motion to make it for one year, 2022. The ATFC roll call vote on the one year amendment was: Mr. Forestal: Aye, Mr. Jones: Aye, Mr. McGrattan: Aye, Ms. Rooney: No, Mr. St. Germain: Aye. The motion was approved 4-1-0.

Mr. St. Germain made the amended motion to allow the BMC to walk the forest for the year 2022. The ATFC roll call vote was: Mr. Forestal: Aye, Mr. Jones: Aye, Mr. McGrattan: Aye, Ms. Rooney: Aye, Mr. St. Germain: Aye. The motion was approved 5-0-0.

Mr. Babik said the BMC compiles the data collected from their walks in the winter, and asked to whom to present the data? Mr. St. Germain suggested Mr. Babik use the general ATFC email account, townforest@ashlandmass.com.

### **8. Shed ramp/driveway extension proposal**

This topic was not discussed.

### **9. Current Projects Review**

This topic was not discussed.

### **10. Dog walking bi-law enforcement Leash and Poop issue**

Pre-meeting information from Mr. St. Germain:

- Dog walking by-law enforcement: The ATFC has discussed poop bag and disposal stations and voted against them, but the ATF still has a problem despite the signs placed in the forest. Mr. St. Germain asked, "What additional action does this committee wish to take to deal with the leash and poop problem?"

This topic was not discussed.

### **11. Trail Creation/Relocation discussions**

#### **a. Braid at loc17 reconsideration**

#### **b. Oak St trail modifications**

#### **c. Water Tank bypass trail**

#### **d. Proposed trail from loc 36 to ROW near loc 44**

#### **e. White trail loc 20-23 steep section bypass**

#### **f. Quarry Loop trail Loc 10-14**

#### **g. North Trail connector to current trail near Wildcat Hill**

#### **h. Location numbering additions/changes**

This topic was not discussed.

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**Motion to Adjourn**

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

The meeting adjourned at 8:58 pm.

Future Meeting Dates: May 25 Site Visit, June 8, June 22