

Rowe Board of Selectmen
May 27, 2021
6:00 P.M. via Remote Participation

Board of

Selectmen: Chair Charles Sokol, Vice-Chair Joanne Semanie, Selectman Edward Silva
(Entered at 6:20)

Other

Attendees: Emily Boss, Franklin Regional Land Trust; Virginia Gabert, Conservation Commission; Alain Peteroy, Franklin Regional Land Trust; Ramon Luis Sanchez, Conservation Commission Chair (Entered at 6:08)

Audience of

Citizens: Rosemary Gordon

Note: Due to the national COVID-19 pandemic, this meeting was held via remote participation as authorized by executive order of the governor. All votes are taken via roll-call vote.

Call to Order: Chair Sokol called the Board of Selectmen meeting to order at 6:00 P.M., a quorum of the board present.

Recording Devices: The meeting was being recorded via Zoom.

Franklin Land Trust: Emily Boss and Alain Peteroy from the Franklin Land Trust were welcomed and encouraged to go over their request from the town. Ms. Boss explained that Jean-Claude van Itallie has property on Davenport Road which he is looking to place into conservation status with the Trust. There is funding available via a grant that helps people to conserve their land. The process involves the Trust purchasing the land at essentially half of its value, with the landowner donating the other half.

In this particular proposal, there are approximately 240 acres of land in Rowe being set aside, as well as around 40 acres in Charlemont. Both the Charlemont and Rowe Boards of Selectmen have previously expressed interest in supporting this project, but neither Board wants the town to be a co-host for the land. This new proposal would make the Trust the sole landowner. The draft Memorandum of Understanding has been reviewed by town counsel as the Trust's expense. As Rowe and Charlemont have the same counsel, there is no need to have it reviewed twice.

As part of the conservation, a trail would be created about 2.5 miles off Davenport Road for public use. The Trust is working with Mr. van Itallie's Shantigar Foundation to provide a parking area for the trail head. The trail itself will run along the ridge on Warner hill. No motorized vehicles will be allowed on the trails as the owners want "quiet enjoyment". The only motorized vehicles permitted will be for trail maintenance, which makes them very similar to the Park trails.

Ms. Boss noted that there is an opportunity here, as there is an adjoining area for a rare species of bat. This will be a good opportunity to provide more habitat for the species.

The Trust is requesting that the town approve the restrictions requested, and then they will proceed to meet with the members of the Conservation Commission for matters involving wetlands.

MOTION TO APPROVE: A motion was made by Chair Sokol to approve the grant of conservation restriction from the grantor of Jean-Claude van Itallie as written. The motion was seconded by Vice-Chair Semanie, and the roll-call vote was as follows:

Charles Sokol	Aye	Joanne Semanie	Aye
Edward Silva	Abstain		

Mr. Silva noted he was abstaining as he came in later in the discussion, not due to any opposition to the project.

The Selectmen will sign the documents and Mr. McLatchy will notarize and send off to the Trust. Ms. Boss and Ms. Peteroy were thanked for attending, and left the meeting at 6:26 P.M. They were followed by Commissioners Sanchez and Gabert.

Citizen Complaint: A complaint was received from a citizen regarding the condition of a dirt road in town. The citizen was encouraged to attend the meeting but was not present. As such, no further action could be taken on the complaint.

Deerfield River Watershed Association: A letter was received in town hall from the Deerfield River Water Association asking the Selectmen to write a letter of support for federal funding to conduct a study of the Deerfield River. If funded, the study would allow for federal designation as a protected waterway, which could bring in further funding for conservation projects. An example letter of support was provided.

MOTION TO SUPPORT: A motion was made by Chair Sokol and seconded by Selectman Silva to write a letter of support for federal funding of a study. The vote was unanimous in favor:

Charles Sokol	Aye	Joanne Semanie	Aye
Edward Silva	Aye		

Town Hall Reopening: On June 15th, the state of emergency for the Covid-19 pandemic will be ended at the state level, which ends the relaxation of open meeting law requirements. As such, meetings will now have to have a quorum physically present at the meeting location. Town Hall will also be reopening on that date as well, with each department able to make its own rules and requirements about people conducting business (i.e. appointment-only, masks required, etc.).

Discussion ensued about holding meetings at town hall. Though masks can be encouraged, they cannot be required as people have a right to attend meetings of their government officials. Chair Sokol is looking into the possibility of developing a hybrid system, where the public body could still meet in the conference room but allow for streaming via Zoom for those who wish to watch remotely. This would also provide an option for guests from farther away that could participate remotely rather than make the trek out to Rowe. Mr. McLatchy suggested that a line-item transfer could be done to provide funding for a new system, but other options should be looked into as well, including grants. In the meantime, there is a conference phone in the meeting room as a stopgap measure.

Minutes: Minutes were addressed as follows:

MOTION TO APPROVE: A motion was made by Chair Sokol and seconded by Vice-Chair Semanie to approve the (Covid-19 Group) minutes of May 11th and May 25th as written. The votes were as follows:

Charles Sokol	Aye	Joanne Semanie	Aye
Edward Silva	Abstain		

MOTION TO APPROVE: A motion was made by Chair Sokol and seconded by Vice-Chair Semanie to approve the minutes of May 13th and May 18th as written. The votes were as follows:

Charles Sokol	Aye	Joanne Semanie	Aye
Edward Silva	Aye		

MOTION TO APPROVE: A motion was made by Chair Sokol and seconded by Vice-Chair Semanie to approve the minutes of March 15th as written. The votes were as follows:

Charles Sokol	Aye	Joanne Semanie	Aye
Edward Silva	Abstain		

Warrants: No updates were given on the warrants as Vice-Chair Semanie had not been in to sign them yet.

Agreement: A contract with Bears Management Group, Inc. for the play structure at the beach needs to be approved and signed.

MOTION TO APPROVE AND SIGN: A motion was made by Chair Sokol to approve the agreement between the Town of Rowe and Bears Management Group, Inc. DBA Bears Playgrounds contingent upon approval of the Park Commission. The motion was seconded by Vice-Chair Semanie, and the votes were as follows:

Charles Sokol	Aye	Joanne Semanie	Aye
Edward Silva	Aye		

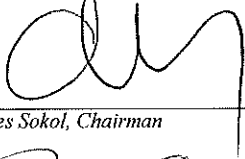
Monroe Bridge Parking Issues: Vice-Chair Semanie reported that there has been a problem with people parking down by Monroe Bridge. There are “no parking” signs up, but absent a local bylaw, they can only issue tickets and not tow the cars. In a previous year they *had* towed cars, which had a decent effect on the parking situation, but the town is back to the same problem now that they can’t tow. A bylaw takes town meeting action, and one was suggested by the Bylaw Review Committee. No action was ever taken with the proposed bylaws, however. It was agreed to add the proposed bylaws from the Bylaw Review Committee to the ongoing project list for the Board of Selectmen.

Adjourn: A motion was made by Chair Sokol and seconded by Vice-Chair Semanie to adjourn the meeting at 7:04. The votes were unanimous in favor:

Charles Sokol	Aye	Joanne Semanie	Aye
Edward Silva	Aye		

*Respectfully Submitted,
Paul McLatchy III, Administrative Assistant to the Boards*

Approved: June 10, 2021



Charles Sokol, Chairman



Joanne Semanie, Vice-Chair

Edward Silva, Selectman

Attachments:

- Agenda
- Grant of Conservation Restriction Document
- Letter from Deerfield River Watershed Association
- Bears Management Group Contract