

Town of Rowe Park Commission
Meeting Minutes
September 7, 2021
6:30 PM
Online Zoom Meeting

In attendance: Laurie Pike (Park Commissioner), Chris "Selmi" Hyytinen (Park Commissioner), Hannah Poplawski (Park Commissioner), and Sean Loomis (Park Manager)

Audience of Citizens: None

Called to Order: 6:32 PM

Approval of August Park Meeting Minutes by roll-call vote: Laurie Pike-yes, Chris "Selmi" Hyytinen-yes, and Hannah Poplawski-yes.

Fitness Center

1. Some updates on the Fitness Center opening;
 - a. Masks are required even if you are vaccinated.
 - b. The hours of operation are Mon-Thurs 12-5pm because that is when people are working in the Town Hall to open the fitness center.
 - c. Residents need to sign a waiver once a year. (We will put a date on this waiver so we can keep track of when residents and fitness center users filled theirs out last)
 - d. There is the possibility of hiring staff for the fitness center and maybe adding additional hours in the morning a couple days a week for people to use it. The person would have to be at least 18 years old. This person would not have to be a certified trainer but if they were they could teach classes.

Grants, Programs and Collaborations

1. On September 4, the Southern Vermont Natural History Museum travelled to the Park for the Wildlife Tales Program that was in collaboration with the Town Library. Michael Clough told engaging stories about the corn snake, the wood turtle, a red-tailed hawk, and a cottontail rabbit. He also presented natural history facts about them. 21 people were in attendance.
2. Based on the turnout we had for the Wildlife Tales Program we think it would be beneficial to continue collaborating with the Library. We discussed some program ideas for the future that included mushroom identification and wild edibles identification and use.

3. We also discussed some ideas for the Cultural Council Grant; a pollinator garden, planting wildflowers and milkweed in the meadow, bee condos, a new pamphlet for the meadow trail so it could be used as an interpretive trail (include tree identification, natural history, geologic formations, and other natural identifications), and installing a cemented map at the Leanto that shows orientation and what other mountains and features you are able to see.
4. There was a further discussion about the free library/book exchange that we have talked about with the Library. We still need information about where it will be placed but we could apply for a Cultural Council Grant and use it to build or buy this structure.

Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership

1. I (Hannah Poplawski) spoke with Lisa Hayden from the Mohawk Woodlands Partnership and Michael Cucchiara who is a Park Commissioner in Heath about the grants the Park has received in the past and what the Park was awarded this year. I will present at a meeting coming up later in September.
2. Michael Cucchiara spoke about working with the town of Rowe and the Park Commissioners to expand the Mohawk-Mahican Trail to go through Rowe and use some of the trails at the Park to do so. Michael and some volunteers are already working on a trail system in Heath, Colrain, and Shelburne Falls. I am going to contact him about getting his initial thought on what trails would be used and more details about what this kind of project will entail.

Park Updates

1. The dead or infected white pine trees at Percy's Point are scheduled to be removed in November. 15 white pines will be removed, leaving behind 1 healthy tree. The dead hardwood trees will also be removed.
2. The assessment that was completed by Bill Lattrell is posted on the Park Commission website under "Lattrell Ecological Consulting Evaluation Report on Percy Point Trees" and can be reviewed by all residents. This report lays out why the trees are being removed and what will be replanted in their place, we suggest that any Rowe residents who have questions about this project read the report.

3. Based on the report from Bill Lattrell, we are going to try to move the project back till later in the winter because this is the time that will result in the least ecological impacts. Sean will contact the company who is removing the trees to discuss if this is possible.
4. The new playground installation is still scheduled for this fall. Sean is preparing all remaining documents needed.

Managers Report

1. The kiosks are still being worked on, Sean did look at them and the company will call when they are done. The expected completion date is the end of September/October. We will be getting big kiosks for the major trail heads and smaller ones for the minor trailheads. We did discuss the possibility of constructing one large kiosk, three sided, with the money we have left over and using it at the Park Headquarters. Sean will contact someone who can build this larger kiosk for us.
 - a. Roll Call vote to use the leftover money for the large kiosk- Laurie Pike-yes, Chris "Selmi" Hyytinen-yes, and Hannah Poplawski-yes
2. Park vehicles are getting old and requiring more maintenance. Sean is going to review the budget and look into what it would take in purchasing a new ranger/utility vehicle. This past summer the park truck had to go into the shop several times for brake replacements and other issues, and it is anticipated that it will have to go in soon to deal with rusting issues. We expect that this will also have to be replaced soon. A couple ideas were thrown out including talking to the highway department about getting on their truck rotation schedule, surplus vehicles, buying a used truck, and talking to the finance committee. We will also look into grants that could be used for this.
3. We are still discussing our options for the Tennis Courts. Laurie is going to contact someone in eastern MA to see what she can find out regarding pricing and facility type that could be installed.
4. Once the trail assessment is completed, we are anticipating that there is going to be a lot of work required to maintain the trails and address everything that they suggest. Sean is suggesting that we start looking at more equipment that he can use to do this and that crew members can use in the summer for better efficiency. Once we receive the final trail assessment we can begin researching what kind of equipment is needed and if there are grants we can apply for. Possible grants to apply for are the MassTrail Grant and grants from the DCR.

5. The question of summer employment for 2022 was brought up. Sean is expecting that Michael will return as a lifeguard but James will not. There is also the possibility of Claudia Johnson returning and helping out. As for the other crew members that worked this past summer, Emma Poplawski will not be returning and he can not say for sure if the rest will.

Meeting Adjourned at 8:06 PM

Respectfully Submitted by,

Hannah Poplawski

Park Commissioner