

Charlotte Park and Wildlife Refuge Oversight Committee
Meeting
Wednesday, March 15, 2017
1:00 p.m.
at Nordic Farms Conference Room
1211 Ethan Allen Highway

Members present: Jenny Cole, Mark Dillenbeck, Dorothy Hill, Sue Smith

Others: Greg Smith, Braxton Robbason and family

Annual meeting with Mike LaClair, Nordic Farms to discuss agriculture use of Park land

Discussion included field accesses, mowing of the bobolink field and financial impact of delayed mowing, the agricultural lease payment, and a review of acreage in agricultural use. Mike reported that the Overlook field has the poorest yield. He may reseed using no-till planting. Milk prices are still low—not enough to cover costs. In the past, the price has increased when more milk is exported to other countries.

There was discussion of future plans for diversification at the Nordic Farms, with partnerships to get the methane digester operating again, to grow algae and produce fertilizer onsite, and to experiment with growing hemp. Mike will advise us if there is a change in business ownership that would require a transfer of the park agricultural lease.

The Ahead of the Storm site 1 erosion control project is along the northern edge of Unit I. Mike described an eroded area on the south side of the field.

There is no outside funding for the bobolink field this year.

Items to follow up on:

- Mike stated that they are not using access at the Varney/Edgewater property and are able to access fields in the northern part of the park by using “Snowdrift Lane.” Access to the Overlook field can be difficult due to wet conditions. Junior Lewis offered suggestions last year for improvement. The Park Committee will contact Junior again. There may be money in the budget to cover costs.
- Jenny will check on last year’s agricultural lease payment to see whether or not the bobolink field was included. The Committee had not made a decision on reducing the lease payment because the field perimeter was mowed early by mistake.
- Mike will ask the NRCS about allowing the Park Committee to review field acreage.
- Jenny will deliver a copy of the Ahead of the Storm site 1 plans to Mike.

Park Committee members expressed appreciation for the good job Mike/Nordic Farms is doing maintaining park fields and working with the Committee.

Park Committee membership—potential new members, expanding the size of the Committee

Jenny and Sue met with Dean to discuss the number of Park Committee members and vacancies. The Park Management Plan makes suggestions regarding the make-up of the Committee, but does not establish number and terms. Generally, there have been seven members. For now, it seems advisable to have seven members plus a Selectboard liaison. This would mean there are 2 vacancies. Greg Smith will be interviewed on March 27. Braxton Robbason expressed interest, but feels he may not have time to be a member. He would like to work in the Park, and is looking into helping with planning bog bridge replacement. Sue and Jenny will be meeting with Christy Gallese, another interested Charlotter. Jenny suggested that the Committee discuss the issue of number of members and terms so we can make a recommendation to the Selectboard.

Updates

Elm tree planting:

20 elm trees are arriving this week. Horsford Nursery will receive delivery and pack the trees in sawdust. 15 trees from the Nature Conservancy will be arriving—some in April and others in June. Planting dates in early April were discussed. Mark will communicate with volunteers about planting dates. Sue recently met a UVM student who may be interested in recruiting others for a work day at the park on Earth Day. It was suggested that the students help with planting if the timing is right. Dorothy has flags for marking locations for trees. Mark will contact Junior about wood chips for mulch. Transporting trees and mulch was discussed. Mark will seek quotes for watering.

Replacement of bog bridges:

Jenny met with Braxton on Monday. He is interested in coming up with a plan to replace bog bridges on Roberts Way. There will be more information in the future.

Hedgerow work by Church Hill Landscapes:

Due to weather, the start of work has been delayed. The project should begin soon.

Grant received for Ahead of the Storm project:

The grant for the site 1 project was approved.

Earth Day:

Projects for the April 22 volunteer work day will be determined as the day approaches.

Park Management Plan

Status report on work, distribution of drafts:

Recent drafts will be e-mailed to committee members. Mark is working on Woodlands, Jessie on Wildlife Meadows. Scheduling of work sessions will be done by e-mail.

Approval of minutes

Minutes for meetings on January 26 and February 16 will be approved at a future meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 3:00 p.m.