

## MINUTES

Heywood Meadow Stewardship Committee Meeting

Thursday March 11, 2021

Via Zoom

Present: Delia Kaye (Natural Resources Director), Joanne Gibson (Co-Chair), Susan Clark (Co-Chair), Stan Lucks, Sandy Smith (minutes), Cris van Dyke, Mary Clarke, Lola Chaisson, Bev Miller

Guest: Nancy Nelson

The meeting was called to order by Joanne Gibson, Co-Chair, at 9:05am.

**Minutes of January 14, 2021 Meeting:** On a motion made by Lola Chaisson and seconded by Bev Miller, the minutes of the meeting of January 14, 2021 were approved unanimously, as amended.

**Minutes of February 11, 2021 Meeting:** On a motion made by Cris van Dyke and seconded by Lola Chaisson, the minutes of the meeting of February 11, 2021 were approved unanimously, as amended.

**Update on Proposed Placement of Umbrella Earth Day Art Work:** Subsequent to the February 11<sup>th</sup> meeting, Delia discussed the Committee's concerns about pedestrians crossing Heywood Street with Caroline Provost, the Arts & Environment Program Coordinator at the Umbrella Arts Center. An agreement was reached that installations of sculpture on Heywood Meadow will be limited to Ford Park and the west Meadow. Additional installations may be placed on other Town conservation land such as Chamberlin Park and Mill Brook Way. Delia reported the Umbrella received eight or nine proposals for pieces of sculpture, and agreed to send a link to the proposals to the Committee members. Susan Clark spoke for the Committee by saying she trusts Delia to represent the interests of the Committee with respect to which pieces of art are most appropriate for installation on the Meadow.

**Status of Stone Wall Extension Project:** Delia reported that Stan Nobles is expected to visit the Meadow today and will contact her afterwards. He expects to start this month. Prior to the start of the project, Stan Nobles, Stan Lucks, the Town Engineer, and Delia will meet in the field to determine the final placement of the wall along the curve from Heywood Street to Lexington Road.

**Continuation of Review of Goals and Treatment Recommendations from the 2005 "Landscape and Preservation Plan for Heywood Meadow":** Having finished its consideration of the seven Goals listed on page 20 of the 2005 Landscape Plan, Joanne asked the Committee to focus on the Landscape Character Recommendations beginning on page 21 of the Plan. Lola offered some general comments reflecting back on the earlier discussions. She felt the Committee is being asked to react to the concerns of a limited number of people. She also felt the ambiguity of time periods the Plan refers to is making it difficult for the Committee to decide on appropriate goals and treatments, and proposed that the Committee narrow its focus to the 19<sup>th</sup> century citing the influence of Emerson and Thoreau. Bev acknowledged the Meadow has changed, but it still is a place where people can find "comforting quiet." She said she has no issue with people who like the Meadow as it is.

Sandy Smith expressed the view that the historical significance of Heywood Meadow derives from its location along the Battle Road, not because of the transcendentalists who lived nearby and wrote about nature. He offered as evidence that the Meadow is part of the American Mile Historic District which commemorates the route the British took into Concord in April 1775 as well as the route of their retreat. Although the Meadow is not formally part of the Minute Man National Historical Park, it is on a direct route between the Park's two sites on Lexington Road to the east and Liberty Street to the west.

Joanne suggested contacting Ann Forbes to get additional insights into the history of the Meadow. Nancy Nelson observed that while we can't recreate the land as it was in 1775, nor is there any intention to do so, we can protect its openness, and she felt that providing habitat for pollinators was not in conflict with that objective.

Joanne agreed, but said she felt the grasses and other plantings had grown too high last summer and fall, and had blocked the views across the Meadow from east to west. Delia reminded the Committee that she didn't have staff last summer because of the pandemic, but that a new, full-time Land Manager, Will Holden, would be starting next Wednesday (March 17<sup>th</sup>), which will allow more proactive meadow maintenance moving forward. Will has experience working for Americorps, the Barnstable Land Trust, and Davey Tree Company. Delia will invite him to a future meeting.

Mary Clarke recalled letters to the Concord Journal from Russell Robb and Pierce Browne on the subject of mowing the Meadow, and Joanne reminded the Committee that this is one of very few historic landscapes among the Town's conservation properties.

Susan identified the frequency of mowing the Meadow as the underlying issue, and recalled a time when the Meadow was mowed about every two weeks resulting in a turf-like look. Joanne replied that no one wants to go back to a mowed turf look. Sandy said the question isn't about mowing every two weeks, but simply about whether the Meadow is mowed once or twice a year, and the timing of the second mowing. Joanne suggested mowing as early as possible in the fall. Acknowledging there is no single answer to the timing question, Susan suggested it would be best to allow seeds to set in October before mowing the Meadow.

Nancy thought a decision had been made to move the tall grasses that blocked the views across the Meadow last fall. Susan felt it would be difficult to move the tall grasses. Delia agreed to keep the Meadow visually open and offered to try to weed whip the tall grasses this year. Lola felt this approach would be less labor intensive and could be reversed after a year if it didn't work as planned. Cris suggested we see if it works.

Delia summarized saying she would move the tall Indian grass to the fence line and weed whip anything else that grew above three feet in height. It was agreed to mow the portions of the East Meadow near the Battery in May and the East and West Meadows in the late fall. Delia assured the Committee she would have greater ability to respond to conditions on the ground this season than in previous years.

Then followed a brief discussion of the background of the new Land Manager and how his role relates to the Town's Tree Warden. A suggestion was made that the Tree Warden might be better assigned to the Natural Resources Division, but Delia said that position would stay in Public Works. The Land Manager will do the tree work on Town conservation land.

Mary left the meeting at 10:09am.

Joanne reviewed the action items and said the next meeting on April 8<sup>th</sup> would focus on the Landscape Character Recommendations on pages 21-25 of the Plan. The May 13<sup>th</sup> meeting would be held on the Meadow, weather permitting.

Stan Lucks offered the view that the Committee should step back and decide what it wants the Meadow to look like, and then leave it to the Natural Resources Division to get the Meadow back to a more self-sustaining, "natural" condition.

Nancy left the meeting at 10:25am.

Delia said she feels the Committee needs to be more prescriptive now to develop a vision for the future.

Cris moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:27am. The motion was seconded by Stan and approved unanimously.