

Town of Concord  
Estabrook Woods Access Study Committee

Thursday, November 17, 2016

Minutes

Members Present: Sally Schnitzer  
Polly Reeve  
Neil Rasmussen  
Peter Siebert  
Bonnie Pohlig  
Justin King  
Lisa Pohl  
Jeff Adams  
Kathryn Angell (by phone)

Also present: Nick d'Arbeloff, Carlisle liaison, non-voting  
Delia Kaye, Natural Resources Director  
Jane Hotchkiss, Select Board Liaison

Public Present: Peter Gifford  
Donna Robbins  
Bryan Windmiller  
Ellie Bemis  
Lansing Old  
Caroline Crocker  
Terry Rothermel  
Dinah Buechner-Vischer  
Kathy Ellison  
Tim White  
Abby White  
Brooks Read  
David Santomenna, Trustees of Reservations

1. **Minutes:** Minutes for November 3, 2016 meeting were discussed. Several amendments were offered and accepted, and the minutes were approved as amended.
2. **Correspondence:** Several pieces of correspondence were received since the last meeting and had been previously distributed to committee members. Sally Schnitzer noted that Peter Gifford had contacted the committee to suggest that

the committee take comments from the public before voting on their final report, and that was what we would plan to do.

**3. Administrative matters:**

- a. Sally Schnitzer asked Jane Hotchkiss to comment on the next steps that will be taken after the committee presents its report to the Select Board and disbands. Jane emphasized that the committee's work and recommendations will be taken seriously by the Board, and that there will be ongoing discussions before final decisions are made. The Board will discuss their process in public meetings, and there will be at least one or two public meetings on the topic. She is grateful that the stage has been set by the committee's work so the process can continue smoothly.
- b. Lansing Old delivered a letter to the committee (attached) signed by more than 70 people, expressing concerns about the size of the proposed parking area on the Aphorp Land and its potential negative impact on Punkatasset and Estabrook Woods. The letter proposed that the appropriate number of parking spaces at this location should be limited to 10-12.
- c. Since the last meeting, we have learned that the land owned by the Robb family that is part of the Forest Legacy program will be donated to the Trustees of Reservations before the end of 2016. David Santomena of the Trustees of Reservations expressed gratitude for this very generous donation. This transfer is a reminder that land ownership in the Woods is constantly evolving.
- d. Sally asked the committee for authorization for the co-chairs to prepare the minutes of this final meeting and file them with the clerk on behalf of the committee. The committee voted unanimously to provide this authorization.
- e. Lansing Old spoke on behalf of the petitioners who submitted the letter (see 3.b. above). He emphasized that their highest concern is with protecting the land, not the rights of those using the woods for recreation or walking dogs.

**4. Finalizing the Committee's Recommendations:**

- a. Neil Rasmussen suggested adding a section of specific recommendations for Punkatasset, as we have included for the other access points. This will

include recommendations for the Town's public safety team to address immediate improvements along Monument Street including grading and signage. The committee approved of this amendment.

- b. Kathy Angell had submitted written suggested edits prior to the meeting, and the committee reviewed these one by one, accepting many of them. The chairs annotated copies of the draft recommendations to record the committee's amendments.
- c. Various members of the committee and Delia Kaye suggested edits to clarify sections of the documents, including the recommendations related to signage, the recommendation pertaining to the creation of a group to identify, monitor and improve the stewardship of the Woods, reference to the Natural Resources Commission, and communication of accurate information through the town's website.
- d. Bonnie Pohlig expressed concern that all the valuable input from the public be captured in a meaningful and useful way. There were many good ideas proposed, such as adopting quiet hours, and we did not thoroughly discuss each one. She would like to find a way to summarize these suggestions so they could be more accessible as people continue to work on these issues. Sally asked Jane to respond to this concern. Jane indicated that all correspondence received, as well as our minutes and materials will become part of the public record of the committee, and that the Select Board has been reviewing public comment as it has been received by the Estabrook Committee. It would be difficult to capture the substance of the correspondence in a summary. Polly Reeve suggested that the cover letter include a sentence about the file of correspondence and other materials such as maps, deeds, etc., so that the Select Board is reminded that these documents exist and can be consulted as the process moves forward. The committee agreed to this.
- e. Final votes on recommendations lacking consensus: Much of the Committee's report is supported as the consensus of the Committee, but there were several sections where the Committee did not reach unanimity in the Preliminary Report. Given the substantial input at the October 24 public hearing, and the correspondence received since our last votes, the Committee revisited the four remaining areas of disagreement (the

“shaded” areas of the draft recommendations) and took votes for each of them. The votes were as follows:

1. #4a, number of recommended parking spaces for proposed parking area of the Apthorp Land:
  - 12-16 (4, plus Carlisle liaison)
  - 16-20 (5)
  - 20-24 (0)
2. #4cii, whether or not to keep “no parking” restrictions on Estabrook Road in place if a lot at the Apthorp Land can be built:
  - Keep restrictions in place (7, plus Carlisle liaison)
  - Do not keep parking restrictions in place (2)
3. #4ciii, whether or not to temporarily lift a portion of the “no parking” restrictions on Estabrook Road until a lot can be built at Apthorp:
  - Temporarily lift restrictions (4)
  - Do not temporarily lift restrictions (5, plus Carlisle liaison)
4. #4dii, whether or not to lift “no parking” restrictions on Estabrook Road to add additional parking for 5-11 cars, if a lot cannot be built on the Apthorp land and the Town provides safe parking for 13 cars at Punkatasset:
  - Lift restrictions (3)
  - Do not lift restrictions (6, plus Carlisle liaison)

Some committee members mentioned factors that were important to the evolution of their positions on these matters. These included: public sentiment in favor of additional parking and access to the Woods; legal questions regarding public access at Estabrook Road and whether that access might be closed; Harvard’s email about limiting parking and the importance of preserving the educational and research value of the Woods; concerns expressed by citizens about the potential impacts of significantly increased parking at Punkatasset; a desire to balance access at different entry points; and information provided through correspondence and public comment.

## 5. **Public Comments**

- a. Terry Rothermel: Expressed concern that the proposed “friends of Estabrook Woods” group seems to leave out the public, if it only includes landowners and conservation organizations. Urged the committee to state that the public should be included.
- b. Dinah Buechner-Vischer: Voiced her concern that additional parking should not be put on Estabrook Road, for safety reasons.
- c. Ellie Bemis: Feels that the public perspective has been well-represented, but that the committee did not adequately speak for the Woods itself. It is a nature preserve, not a public park. While we shouldn’t be exclusive, access should be limited and spread out so as not to destroy this beloved resource. It is easier to increase parking in the future than to decrease it. 10-12 spots at Punkatasset is a good place to start. Concord needs to work with Harvard and the Trustees to steward the Woods; Punkatasset has major issues that need to be addressed.
- d. Tim White: Expressed concern that the negative issues experienced at Estabrook Road will just shift to the Punkatasset neighborhood. Already there is a need for traffic calming measures on Monument Street. He’s not against providing parking, but safety issues need to be looked at holistically. The Monument Street community has not been adequately involved.
- e. Bryan Windmiller: Thanked the committee for their work. Noted that there was no mention of wildlife habitat in the preamble to the recommendations document, and suggested adding this. Feels that providing better parking near the Punkatasset entrance would be good if it can be worked out, but that a parking area should be sized at the lower end of the ranges we have discussed. A big parking lot would negatively change the experience of visiting a natural area. He brings field trips of 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders to Estabrook Woods, starting at Punkatasset, and for many this is the first time they have been there and it is one of the few opportunities they have to be in a natural area.
- f. Abby White: Feels she is still trying to catch up, because Monument Street has been unrepresented to date. She wants to be part of the process going forward. Replacing current parking at Punkatasset with larger numbers of cars would just transfer the issues at Estabrook Road to Monument Street.

She stated that the charge of the committee was not about parking, and adding more parking does not seem to solve the problems we set out to solve.

- g. Peter Gifford: Asked the committee what impact the petition distributed earlier in the meeting had on their recommendations. Various members of the committee responded about the issues and outcomes we have been weighing. Delia Kaye referred to the historical record that in the 1970s a parking lot was approved at Punkatasset, but was never built due to various concerns. Kathy Angell pointed out that part of our charge was to make recommendations on how to deal with increased pressure, and yet parking has been reduced from previous levels. We have also recommended communications measures and codes of conduct, and parking should not be looked at in isolation. Sally commented that the committee has come as far as it is able to, and Jane Hotchkiss reminded everyone that the process will continue.
- h. Abby White: asked how the committee was formed, and Jane Hotchkiss responded that the Select Board appointed a temporary committee to study the issues and make recommendations to the Board. Abby expressed concern that no one from Monument Street was on the committee.

#### **6. Final Vote to approved Committee Recommendations**

- a. A few more edits were proposed and accepted for the document, including adding “members of the public” to the recommendation about forming a group to steward Estabrook Woods on an ongoing basis, adding language about the habitat significance of the Woods to the preamble, and being consistent in the formatting of the various committee votes in footnotes.
- b. Jeff Adams moved to authorize the co-chairs to make the edits the committee agreed upon, and issue the document as a final report to the Select Board. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.
- c. It was also moved that the Submittal Letter that had been previously circulated be approved, with addition of a statement about the public file containing correspondence and other significant materials. This motion was seconded and unanimously approved.

7. **Final remarks and adjournment:** Delia Kaye informed the committee that recommendation #7b (now #8b) has been implemented. Everyone was very pleased and grateful. Sally Schnitzer thanked all members of the committee for their hard work and commitment to this process, and the committee thanked the co-chairs for their leadership. The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 AM.

*Final minutes prepared and submitted on behalf of the Committee by Co-Chairs Polly Reeve and Sally Schnitzer on November 29, 2016.*

**Documents consulted or reviewed at meeting:**

- Letter signed by citizens and delivered by Lansing Old
- Draft Final Recommendations dated November 14, 2016
- Draft Submittal letter