

Shutesbury Recreation Committee Meeting Minutes
January 25, 2022
4PM, Zoom

Present: Barbara Bigelow, BZ Reilly, Christine Robinson, Christine Marglin, Ann Brigham; absent: Elaine Puleo
Leslie Bracebridge, guest and Chris Volente, guest

Meeting begun at 4:00

Approval of last minutes : minutes approved

Agenda:

1. Chris Volente from Kestrel to talk about Ames Pond
2. Skating event
3. Brief updates on other events (orienteering, field day, invasive plant walk, and any others members are working on)
4. On agenda of Finance Committee meeting evening of 1/25 is Recreation Committee 2023 Budget.
5. If time, do we need to update the Recreation Committee web page?

Chris Volente: Ames Pond and land on Pelham Hill Road

Rec Committee interest in creating more accessible trails led to Chris being invited to speak with us about the plans for Ames Pond accessibility. Chris's position as a staff member of Kestrel is as a stewardship protector, overseeing lands Kestrel holds and trails on those lands, as well as supporting and maintaining trails on other lands, for instance Pelham lands and the Robert Frost Trail in Amherst.

Chris shared a map of the Ames Pond area showing Conservation Restrictions, the existing trail network, parking area, boardwalk, and area planned to be accessible. Kestrel has dedicated a significant amount of funds, the most ever out toward a trail initiative, for the trails, as well as private donation, hopes for Shutesbury CPA funding, and a Mass Trails grant that has been applied for and that is necessary to replace the boardwalk at the site which has fallen into disrepair. The boardwalk will be widened to allow wheelchairs to pass each other, making it accessible. The price for this boardwalk will be \$67,000. There are hopes to expand the parking area, get rid of invasive plants at that location, put a gravel surface on roughly the first half of the meadow trail, and on the second half, which is even more subject to deep water, putting in a boardwalk-like bridge. (Planning to maintain sculptures that are there, as a second stage of the project.) Trails along the pond would be the next stage of focus, closing down a pond edge trail, rerouting to another trail that is better for the resource. They have done some cleanup work and blazing on trails. The wetland loop includes a boardwalk in moderate disrepair, which they will fix. The carriage road is flooded at least part of the year under about 18 inches of water, possibly from beaver activity. They would like to keep the wetland loop and carriage road as useful and passable, and are hoping to put in a boardwalk. They are also looking at the ledge ascent, with rock steps that need to be stabilized. These plans are all first stage projects for the area.

BZ notes that many Shutesbury residents used to enjoy the pond itself and would like to see it useable again for kayaking and canoeing, and ice skating in winter. Leslie has kayaked there and feels it was an intrusion on the wildlife there. Leslie recently saw bear tracks on the meadow there, and others have spotted bears there as well.

Kestrel would like a letter of support from our committee, and to make sure we understand their plans and are supportive of them. Stage one trail improvements will all be in one area, the western area near the pond, to see how feasible it will be to maintain the system as a loop. Land owners there now are supportive of the trail network but Kestrel needs to be careful of putting resources into trails that they won't fully control. Landowners have an easement on the driveway that enters the property and they are concerned about increased public use of the driveway. These issues have yet to be fully worked out. Leslie points out that three plots abutting the property are Shutesbury town-owned and it might be possible to access the property through one of them. BZ wants to fight to keep the sculptures accessible to those walking the trails, and is willing to help apply for funds to repair and maintain the sculptures and their accessibility.

We unanimously voted to approve a letter supporting Kestrel's proposals for Ames Pond.

Pelham Hill Road property: Kestrel would also like letter of support to purchase this land. We unanimously voted to approve this letter as well.

Purchase of skates for school children in need of skates. Elaine and Christine are engaged in this project. They are also planning a skating party. Are there liability issues involved in such an event?

Invasive plant walk: someone will lead this. CP funds: they want to put forward our proposal to move the location of the community garden.

Meeting adjourned at 4:59.

Next meeting Tuesday, February 22 at 4pm.