



Minutes of Meeting - January 28, 2013

Present

Bill B. (President), Lars A. (VP), Jane G. (Treasurer), Pam J. (Secretary), Carl C. (VP Trails), Tyler E. (Landmine), Vicki S. (Web Manager), Sandy C. (Membership), Kerri-Anne Hollingshead (Rep. Garrett Bradley Office), Steve G. (Park Supervisor), Matt T. (DCR), Stephen I., Pete Gamache (EPO), Wayne S. (FOW), David Horte (HPD), Carol B. (FOW), John K. (Snow Dogs), Jason Zimmer (District Supervisor Div. Fish and Wildlife MA), Mark S. (with Calvin and LiLi),

Number signed in: 19

Meeting convened at 7:03 PM

Minutes are presented in Agenda order.

Opening Remarks and Introductions (Bill Boles – President)

Bill introduced himself and invited all attendees to introduce themselves. Bill stated that several attendees were specifically at the meeting to participate in the discussion of introducing bow hunting to control the deer population in Wompatuck.

VP Report (Lars A. – VP)

Lars reported that it is currently the “slow season” in Wompatuck and that he will add to discussions throughout the meeting.

Secretary’s Report (Pam J. – Secretary)

Jane was asked to present the November 19 report as she substituted for Pam during that meeting. Jane made one addition to the minutes: there was discussion at that meeting addressing deer hunting in Wompatuck. No other changes or additions were offered. With that verbal change, a motion was made and seconded to accept the November minutes; the vote was unanimous to accept the November minutes with the one change.

Treasurer’s Report (Jane G. – Treasurer)

Jane reported that the current balance in the checking account is: \$24,669.78. Kay Doherty of Sharing, Inc., representing the “Good Friday Walk” sent a \$200 donation to thank FOW and DCR for supporting this event. Final profit from Landmine 2012 is \$9,732.62. Jane will not be present for the February meeting. Bill B. has checks to cover any expenses while Jane is away. A motion was made and seconded to establish Sharing, Inc. as a Corporate Sponsor of the FOW; the vote was unanimous to accept. A motion was made and seconded to accept the Treasurer’s Report; the vote was unanimous to accept.

Webpage Report (Vicki S. – Web Manager)

Vicki presented her report in person and not from China! The web page is up to date and has been copyrighted for 2013. A motion was made and seconded to accept the Webpage Report; the vote was unanimous to accept.

Membership Report (Sandy C.)

Sandy reported there are currently 130 members. At the November meeting it was decided to make all memberships annual based on a January renewal. All members presently listed will be up for renewal in January 2014. A membership letter was drafted and reviewed by the officers; changes were offered to that letter. Pam will make the recommended changes and forward the letter for final review to the officers. A motion was made and seconded to accept the Membership report; the vote was unanimous to accept.

Deer Hunting in Wompatuck (Jason Zimmer – District Supervisor, SE District, Division of Fish and Wildlife)

Steve G. opened this segment with notes on recent DCR changes to the Code of Massachusetts Regulations for Parks and Forests (CMR). When changes are recommended to the CMR, public meetings are held statewide and there is a 30 day comment period for the public following recommended changes. Changes currently being proposed include: reclassification of horses as pets; limiting camping stays to two weeks for the entire camping season; allowing non-motorized water craft on Aaron River Reservoir; allowing a Wompatuck State Park park-wide deer bow hunting season annually from mid-October through January 1st.

Steve G. has been working with DCR to address the issue of the deer population in Wompatuck which has grown from six deer in 1976 to an unknown number, but that number is estimated to be very large based on sightings and on noted damage to flora and fauna throughout the Park. Hunting is currently allowed in the Wildlife Management Area for birds and raccoons. Shot guns are allowed during appropriate posted hunting seasons. Rifles are allowed to hunt raccoons. Steve G. would like to eliminate the raccoon hunting altogether and thus eliminate rifles in Wompatuck.

Kerri-Anne Hollingshead, speaking for Rep. Garrett Bradley, addressed the group. Kerri-Anne reported that a bill was filed on January 18, 2013 to allow bow hunting to control the deer population in Wompatuck State Park. She commented that the process of legislation for a new bill can take up to two years and goes through multiple steps in the legislative process, including public hearings and committee review. Steve G. commented that it may be faster to change the regulation through the DCR process and that both efforts were going on simultaneously.

Jason Zimmer, District Supervisor of the SE District, Division of Fish and Wildlife addressed the group. Jason reported that the deer population has exploded in Hingham over the past 30 years due to lack of regulated hunting. Hingham currently has an estimated 25 – 35 deer per square mile; any time the population exceeds 18 deer per square mile there are proven negative impacts biologically, socially and ecologically. There are reported and documented increases in the number of vehicular collisions (60-90 annually) and cases of Lyme disease has increased over the past ten years. The recommended population of deer is less than ten deer per square mile.

Safety concerns of bow hunting were discussed with several people adding to the conversation, including David Horte, HPD and other bow hunters present at the meeting. Bow hunting is conducted from tree stands and the vast majority of shots are 20 yards; the maximum range is approximately 40 yards. To the knowledge of the experts present, there have been no documented bow injuries to non-hunters reported in the State. 98% of bow hunting injuries are self-inflicted. Hingham has allowed hunting on Conservation lands to control the deer population.

Current State regulations require that bow hunting must be conducted 150 feet from a paved surface and 500 feet from a structure. DCR can establish additional rules for bow hunting.

Deer Hunting in Wompatuck – Continued

It was also reported that “baiting” is illegal in the State.

Conversation ensued regarding a number of issues, questions and concerns as bow hunting is under consideration. Steve G. confirmed that (if passed and approved by DCR and/or the State Legislature) the entire Park would be open for bow hunting from October 15 through January 1; hunting is allowed up to ½ hour before sunrise and ½ hour before sunset. Sunday hunting is illegal in the State. Steve G. said that hunting would be closed off in the Park when special events were scheduled. He commented that events slow down significantly after October 15 most years. Matt (DCR) asked how the number of hunters would be regulated; hunters would have to register at the Park Supervisor’s Office.

Several present indicated concern for safety of park users, including snow dogs running trails. Discussion ensued about the humane issues of bow hunting. Typically the deer do not die immediately and may run wounded through the Park before dying. Concern was raised about park users encountering wounded and dying deer. Concern was raised that opening a bow season would have a negative public relations impact on park users in all surrounding communities. Recommendation was made that park users should always wear blaze orange during hunting seasons.

Attendees also discussed the option of a “controlled hunt” where the Park could be closed for several days and allowed a trained team to hunt with guns to reduce the population. Comment was offered that one-time controlled hunts do not regulate the deer population effectively for long periods of time and can be expensive to hire professionals to manage the controlled hunt. An annual, on-going bow season will more effectively cull the herd.

Steve G. indicated that the purpose of the discussion at this meeting was to provide background and educational information to those attending. The primary considerations presented are to address the park-wide deer bow hunting and to eliminate the raccoon hunting with rifles. Discussion ensued that comments should be solicited from the FOW membership through an email forum. Pam will compose a message to be sent to the membership and will forward to the Officers for review prior to sending to the membership. A vote can be taken at the February meeting to determine if the FOW either supports or does not support the change to the DCR CMR with regard to allowing an annual park-wide bow hunting season in Wompatuck.

Volunteer Database – REI/TTOR (Steve G.)

The Trustees of Reservations (TTOR) have a volunteer database that has been funded by REI to assist in the preregistration of volunteers for events. Volunteers can sign up and can process the waivers on-line prior to the event. FOW could possibly benefit from the use of this database. More information will be presented at the February meeting.

Upcoming Trail Care Sessions (Carl C.)

Carl reported that the trails are in pretty good shape. Please save the following dates for Trail Care:

March 23 – Trail Care
April 20 – Park Serve Day

Trailside Map Stands (Steve G.)

Steve built map stands and Pam had the appropriate sections of the FOW Wompy map enlarged, sealed and coded with “You Are Here” and “Visitor Center” directional arrows. Stands were placed on Prospect Hill and in the Nature Study area; additional stands will be placed at S14, N12, N29 and C14. Some people reported that the stands look great and are very helpful. More will be placed throughout the Park.

Wompy Museum (Steve G.)

Steve reported that the State has decided to use the Transfer Station at E14 as a supply depot. Since that building will not be available to display Wompatuck artifacts, including maps and other items which were procured from the John P. Richardson Estate. Steve is going to approach the Hingham Historical Society and ask if that group can help in the preservation and presentation of our collection.

FOW Membership Drive (Sandy C., Bill B. and Others)

From the earlier discussion on Membership, edits will be made to the membership letter detailing the changes to the FOW membership term to be annually renewed on January 1st each year.

Americorps Projects for 2013 (Steve G.)

Steve reported that the Americorps project for 2013 will be the rebuilding of the bridge at NW5. Americorps will offer one week support for the project. More will be reported at a later date.

2013 – FOW Projects

This will be addressed at the next meeting.

Old Business

Gate House

Steve reported that the roof of the Gate House needs to be repaired/replaced. Tyler knows someone in that line of business and will try to get a quote.

Gate Pins

Steve G. reported that gate pins continue to go “missing” from the Wompatuck gates. The VoTech can make more pins for a price of approximately \$40; Steve needs 12 pins. Wayne said he may be able to help supply pins and will do some research and get back to Steve before sending out to the VoTech.

PMC South Shore Kids Ride

Lisa Patterson is happy to announce via email that the PMC South Shore Kids Ride will be help in Wompatuck on Sunday, June 9th this year! Save the date! Lisa will be attending an upcoming FOW Meeting to present more details.

Hunters Reported in Park

An email was received from a member indicating that he had run into several men hunting near the Mt. Hope pole line and also at Boundary Pond. Steve G. was aware and had addressed this issue.

Dog Litter Signs

John K. from *Boston Snow Dogs* had beautiful signs made to remind dog owners to pick up their dog's waste and carry it out of the park. The signs could not be placed in the Park, however, one sign was placed at the Doane Street entrance in Cohasset and that road is now significantly cleaner. John asked if FOW would prepare a letter of support for the placement of additional signs in the Park. A motion was made and seconded; the vote was unanimous to write a letter from the FOW in support of the "clean up after your dog" signs. Bill B. will work on drafting a letter to be reviewed and edited by Pam.

New Business

No new business was reported.

Next Meeting

Due to the Presidents' Day holiday on February 18th the FOW Monthly Meeting will be held on:

Monday, February 25th at 7 PM.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:12 PM.

Respectfully submitted by:

Pam Johnson
FOW Secretary