

## WEAC MEETING Minutes -January 2023

Online meeting, Thursday, 1/19/23 @ 7:30 PM

**Members in attendance:** Kate La Croix (chair), Sue McGown, Brian Bayer, Maria Costantini, Julie Gervais, Steve Harte, Anne Marie Kline

**Others in attendance:** Eric Arnold (Hale Education Director), Ellen Larkin Rollings (Planning Board)

Routine business: Approval of December 2022 minutes.

1. The minutes were approved

### Topics discussed w/next steps:

#### Hale status discussion with Eric Arnold

1. Mr. Arnold gave an overview and update on Hale Education. Hale land was acquired by Robert Sever Hale in the 1920's to bring children outdoors. In the 1950's some of the Hale land was sold. The organization has grown over the years, but the mission of Hale has remained focused on running programs for children and training teachers. Currently, up to 10,000 children per year participate. There is no restriction on the sale of land and there is no long-term endowment. The Hale Board is concerned about possible natural disasters (such the break of a dam) that would have significant costs for the organization. In the early 2020's the organization ran into financial problems and began to consider selling some of the land. At the time it received some grants from the Federal Government and no land was sold. In order to protect the land forever, the Hale Board has proposed placing a conservation restriction (CR) on the property. The estimated value of the conservation restriction has been estimated (based on the market value of the property) to be \$46 million. Hale has started a campaign to raise \$26 million from private contributions. The remaining \$20 millions would come from the towns of Dover and Westwood. One way the towns could obtain the needed funds is to approve a debt exclusion. The conservation restriction would allow public access to over 800 protected acres. Hale would retain control of a portion for its operations (including new buildings). More than 1000 acres in total would be protected and preserved. A third party (such as the Trustees) would be the holder of the restriction to guarantee that the conservation rules are respected.

WEAC members offered to spread awareness of the problem to the public and the Select Board. It was noted that the Hale land plays an important role in carbon sequestration and storm management. Ellen Rollings noted that, given the significant evidence of Native American settlements and campsites on and near Hale's property, it may be useful to reach to the tribes and see if they are interested in working with Hale.

2. **Action Items:** In the follow-up discussion, WEAC members agreed to prepare a statement addressed to the Select Board asking for a follow-up public meeting. Steve, Sue, and Brian agreed to draft the statement.

**Earth Day clean up planning discussion.**

3. Before Mr. Arnold left the meeting Julie said that WEAC would like to collaborate with Hale on the organization of the Town's clean up around Earth Day.

**Update on the Community Choice Electricity (CCE)**

1. Maria and Juliana reported that they designed a flyer to announce and explain the CCE. The flyers are being distributed to the libraries, and the Senior Center, various businesses in town.
2. A short video is being produced in collaboration with the Westwood Media Center that explains the CCE. The draft video was played and WEAC members provided feedback. Posters would be helpful to publicize the program.

**3. Action Items**

- WEAC members voted to approve up to \$200.00 for posters to publicize the CCE and the two public meetings, which will be held on January 26 and February 2.
- Julie will post the CCE and the meetings on the Westwood Facebook site. Maria will send her the relevant information.

**Update from pollinator protection working group**

1. Kate reported that she and Maria drafted a short "Westwood Pollinator Protection Plan" that was adapted from the Department of Agriculture Pollinator Protection Plan for the State of Massachusetts. The purpose of the latter is to "provide a set of Best Management Practices (BMPs) guidelines for stakeholders to reference when performing actions that could involve either managed or wild pollinators". Kate would like to reach out to the Conservation Commission to find out whether the issue of pollinator protection has come up during their deliberations regarding wetland protection and the protection of other natural resources. Everyone was in support of this action.

**Future "Did you know...?" articles for the Hometown Weekly**

1. It was agreed that, in addition to an article(s) on the CCE, WEAC will write and publish an article on mini-splits in February.

**Discussion of New Initiatives:** none

**Adjourned:** 9:14 PM

**Next meeting date:** February 16, 2023 at 7:30 PM