

Burlington Johnnycake Mountain Park Advisory Commission

Minutes

Farm Tour

April 10, 2021

- **Call to order:**

Meeting was called to order at 10:05 am.

Commissioners present: Mark Moriarty, Craig Battisto, Robert Dunn, Elizabeth Delano, Christie Dockman and Karen Geitz. Absent: Joan Mack and Tricia Twomey. **Burlington residents in attendance: Tom Finan (Conservation Commission) and Laurie Arel (Burlington Cemetery Association).**

- **Karen Geitz led the Commissioners on a walking tour of the Farm.**

Highlights:

- **Parking Area:** CM started between Barns A and B by looking at how the DPW set up a mailbox for maps and signage. CM noticed the houses that abut the property. We talked about the structures or Barns A, B and C and how they cannot be saved. All must come down. We looked at the field on the corner of Johnnycake Mountain Rd. and Mt. Top Pass and how it was once considered for use as a LAX field, but the size of the area didn't allow for the LAX field.
- **Pond:** DPW made benches and picnic tables for the Park. We noticed a family of three: one was fishing and the other two were playing a board game at the picnic table. DEEP Wildlife Biologist, Pete Picone visited the pond area in October and recommended that the Town contact Greg Bugbee from the Aquatic Division to do an analysis of the pond in June or July. We talked about all the activities that take place here: fishing, skating, and ice hockey. We also looked at the parking situation for pond access.
- **Dwight Harris' Conserved Land across the Street from the Park:** From the highest point, we looked at the views that the park neighbors have, we observed the topography of the park and the location of houses around the perimeter of the park.
- **The 50' Right of Way into the Park:** We crossed Mt Top Pass again and entered the Park between two lots on the right of way and walked on the trail to the bench. We observed the grasslands and Karen told us about the bobolinks, barn swallows and red-winged blackbirds. She also pointed out some of the invasive species plants that grow on the property.
- **Oak Grove with Picnic Tables:** People sat down while Karen explained the history of the word "Johnnycake." She also described John Martin, one of the previous owners of the Farm.
- **Eastern Forested Section of the Property:** We walked over small cut trees, climbed over wire fences, crossed brooks and pulled through the prickly bushes. We found the pins to delineate the property lines and we observed the perimeter of the property and the houses that are there. There are many dead ash trees so this would not be a safe place for trails. A suggestion was made to find out if someone would like to tap the maple trees for sap. We climbed back out of the woods and rejoined the trail that the BLT, Dwight Harris and the DPW created and maintained.

- **Wooden bridge:** This bridge was constructed with materials provided by Dwight Harris and energy and know-how of the BLT. Karen described the flowers that serve as pollinators that grow here. She also spoke about the importance of milkweed for monarchs and their migration to Mexico.
- **Towards the Pine Trees:** Karen described thermal bubbles at Johnnycake and how they help the birds to migrate. She showed CM the stats from the Hawkcount.org website for the previous years' migrations.
- **Horse Shelter:** It was built by Dwight Harris. When we were organizing the park features, Dwight suggested that we put a picnic table here. He cut back the weeds and grass and integrated this area with the trail that goes to the top of the Ledges. We all observed the view from the Horse Shelter and how the DPW cut slats off the side to make the view more accessible.
- **The Ledges:** We looked at the Heublein Tower while Karen told us about John Martin and how he made his money, and his relationship to the Heublein Tower builder. We observed the two wind turbines to the north in Colebrook along Rte. 44. Karen told the CM about how Pete Picone considered this a great field to plant wildflowers. It cannot be used for anything else because of all the ledge and the winds will disperse all the seeds over the lower areas of the park.
- **The Cows:** On the way back to the parking lot, we stopped to look at the cows in the corral and the barns.
- **Questions and comments for/from the public:** Craig Battisto asked Tom Finan, a citizen participant, what Tom remembered about the previous process for the Park design. Tom said it was very hard to find out what was going on with the design and when the meetings were. The process is so much easier this time around. Laurie commented that the Cemetery Association recycled asphalt and may be the asphalt from the farm could be recycled for trails.
- **Meeting adjourned at 12:15 pm:**
Robert made a motion to adjourn, Liz seconded it and all voted in favor.

**Minutes respectfully submitted by,
Karen Geitz
April 14, 2021**