



KOULAS FARM TASK FORCE

Filed with Town Clerk:

DATE: Friday, May 7, 2024

TIME: 7:15 p.m.

PLACE: Chelmsford Town Hall
ADDRESS: 50 Billerica Road
Chelmsford, MA 01824

ROOM: Conference Room 204

MEETING MINUTES

Attendees

Town Manager Paul Cohen	present
Michael Raisbeck	present
Phil Stanway	present
John Swenson	not present
Sue Obendorf	present
John Ray	present
Michael Chludzinski	present
James Dowd	present

1. Meeting Minutes from March 20, 2024 and April 26, 2024 were approved.
2. Updates
 - Mike Raisbeck has drafted a report of the Task Force's recommendations for presentation to the Select Board. This meeting is to review the draft and make adjustments as necessary.
3. Public Comment
 - Jane Newhouse spoke on behalf of Newhouse Wildlife expressing concern that the 4/26/24 meeting of the Task Force regarding Weston Nurseries use of the Right Meadow appeared to be a reversal of the 3/20/24 vote of the Task Force approving Newhouse Wildlife for use of the Right Meadow. Ms. Newhouse reported Weston and her spoke once, regarding the possibility of Weston and Newhouse coexisting on the Right Meadow and it was concluded

that sharing the area was not feasible. Ms. Newhouse is looking for clarification from the Task Force.

4. Discussion

- Task Force members discussed that Newhouse was approved for recommendation to the Select Board for use of the Right Meadow. It was discussed that prior meetings discussed the possibility of Newhouse Wildlife and Weston Nurseries possibly sharing the Right Meadow, however it is clear at this point that sharing the Right Meadow will not work. John Ray expressed full support for Newhouse Wildlife use of the Meadow and opposition to Weston Nurseries use of the property as a for profit nursery on the land, see attached letter from Mr. Ray. Task Force voted that Newhouse Wildlife is recommended for use of the Right Meadow and the language of the draft report should be updated to reflect this strong endorsement. Task Force discussed that Weston Nurseries use of the property is not recommended and should the Town allow use it should be leased with narrowly crafted language for limited plant storage avoiding commercial traffic. Task Force agreed that draft report language on Weston should be strengthened regarding limited use and concerns.
- Task Force entered letter from Mark Petricone (Koulas family) into the record endorsing walking trails and Newhouse Wildlife while opposing commercialization of the property by Weston nurseries, see attached.
- Task Force discussed that report language on Pickle Ball should be updated to clearly state that Pickle Ball Courts are not recommended
- Phil Stanway addenda to the report will be included along with a map and legend.
- Work Parties for trails and invasive species will continue under agreement/supervision of the Town Manager.
- Sledding hill is endorsed, and it can coexist with the Pollinator Meadow.
- John Ray expressed many thanks to DPW for an outstanding job on cleaning up property and creating a parking area for which entire Task Force concurred.

5. Next Steps

- Mike Raisbeck will update the draft report to the Select Board per Task Force comments.
- Updated report will be presented to the Select Board

6. Set next meeting date(s)

- TBD, 5/7/24 potential last meeting,

7. Adjourn

- Meeting adjourned at approximately 8:05 pm

Meeting Minutes taken by: James Dowd

I like Weston Nursery, the staff and the products they sell. Have been shopping there for years. However to be objective I have to consider the proposal as from the industry. Before it is accepted my understanding is that an RFP needs to be sent to all nurseries. So my vote following is to any and all nurseries.

I vote NOT to include a (for profit) nursery in the Koulas Farm site for the following reasons:

- Most neighbors who I've talked to are concerned about the **encroachment of commercial business**. The noise, trucks blocking the road, are a threat to our quiet neighborhood, especially to the abutters.
- The business would potentially be a significant change to the **character** of the open space especially if left without reasonable restrictions. A large percent of the wholesale customers would be landscapers with trucks and trailers.
- The activity and noise of the business **will scare away the animals** presently on site.
- It would also be a potential **safety** concern for events, the trail system, including the proposed ADA trail, or just enjoying the open space.
- This will **negatively impact the values** of our homes.

Lot 1 is full with the trail system, Event area, Newhouse Animal Rescue and Native Plants/Winter Sledding. We don't need to include a for profit entity in this site. If we did, it would take away from space presently envisioned for the above activities, I don't believe it could be a large space. Certainly not as large as Weston Nursery wants.

Any commercial nursery proposal should meet the following reasonable conservation, noise abatement and safety restrictions. These town controls should be attached to notes going up the chain for approvals if and before it goes out again for RFP so the responding entity understands they would be in effect before they respond.

Right side meadow: Upper, other side of hill, needs to be cleared and open in Winter for sledding.

Existing trees: ref conservation requirements of all groups
No clearing, cutting
No cutting trees larger the 3"
Any cutting must be approved by the town's tree warden

Trucks / trailers: (noise abatement and safety)
18 wheel trucks need to be restricted to parking as currently laid out.
No idling trucks longer than 5 minutes
Not allowed on property during town events.

Lease should be average monthly \$ rate based on acreage. I do not support "in kind" payment systems as it is not measurable nor comparable to other nursery proposals.

Newhouse Animal Rescue comments are **totally misstated** on the draft proposal to the Selectmen.

Jane Newhouse of Newhouse Animal Rescue is more popular than anyone on this committee. We should all learn from her. Her work is exactly what Koulas Farm should be. We will be lucky to have her team included on the site. If you don't understand that then listen to her tonight, look at her Facebook pages, and/or tour her facilities.

Her current facilities are out of space. She has to parcel out animals to other facilities once they're well enough.

Jane is courageous, She spent 1 day and ½ in 4 feet of water April 25, 26 to finally capture an injured large beaver.

She took in a Fissure Cat last Friday brought to her by a Lexington Animal Control Officer. It was suffering from possible rat poisoning and could barely move. She nursed it all night and day till it was stable. She then transferred her to Stinky Business for care. This is an example of humans setting out poison to ride themselves of some pest. Something eats the poison and it dies or gets eaten by a predator, Up the chain. The story is in her Facebook page.

To the Koulas Task Force Committee

My name is Mark Petricone . The Koulas family is part of my family (my wife Constance K and my sister-in law Donna K grew up there and worked on the farm)

I have attended all your Task Force meetings.

I have helped Phil S and John Ray with the Trail building and and from the start I have voiced my hope that the Task Force:

1. Build Walking trails to preserve the natural land for the public to enjoy.
2. Preserve the Wildlife whenever possible
3. Post a nice Sign with my father-in-Law's surnamenameKoulas Farm

In the last meeting there was talk of having either Newhouse Injured Animal Rehab facility or lease some of the 25 acre plot to Weston Nursery.

Our family had hoped that if any structure of any kind was permitted to be located on that land, we agree that the Newhouse facility would be best. We feel this way because indirectly and/or directly it was a way of preserving wildlife. We still feel strongly about this. The benefit of having some sort of Security at the site is also worth noting.

We have nothing against the Weston Nursery and wish them well.

However, as someone who drives up and down Pine Hill Road quite frequently, I see first hand how many trucks with deliveries or pickups take place daily in Weston Nursery area of Pine Hill Road.

The idea of having trucks of any size rolling in and out of this Pristine area will be a sad outcome. In the last meeting, some one even said "10 or 18 wheelers will need room in that parking lot area to turn around"!

Think about that sight. Think about noise and the exhaust fumes of these trucks. This would constitute a terrible image in my mind.

Please don't spoil all your good work. So far you have done a great job.

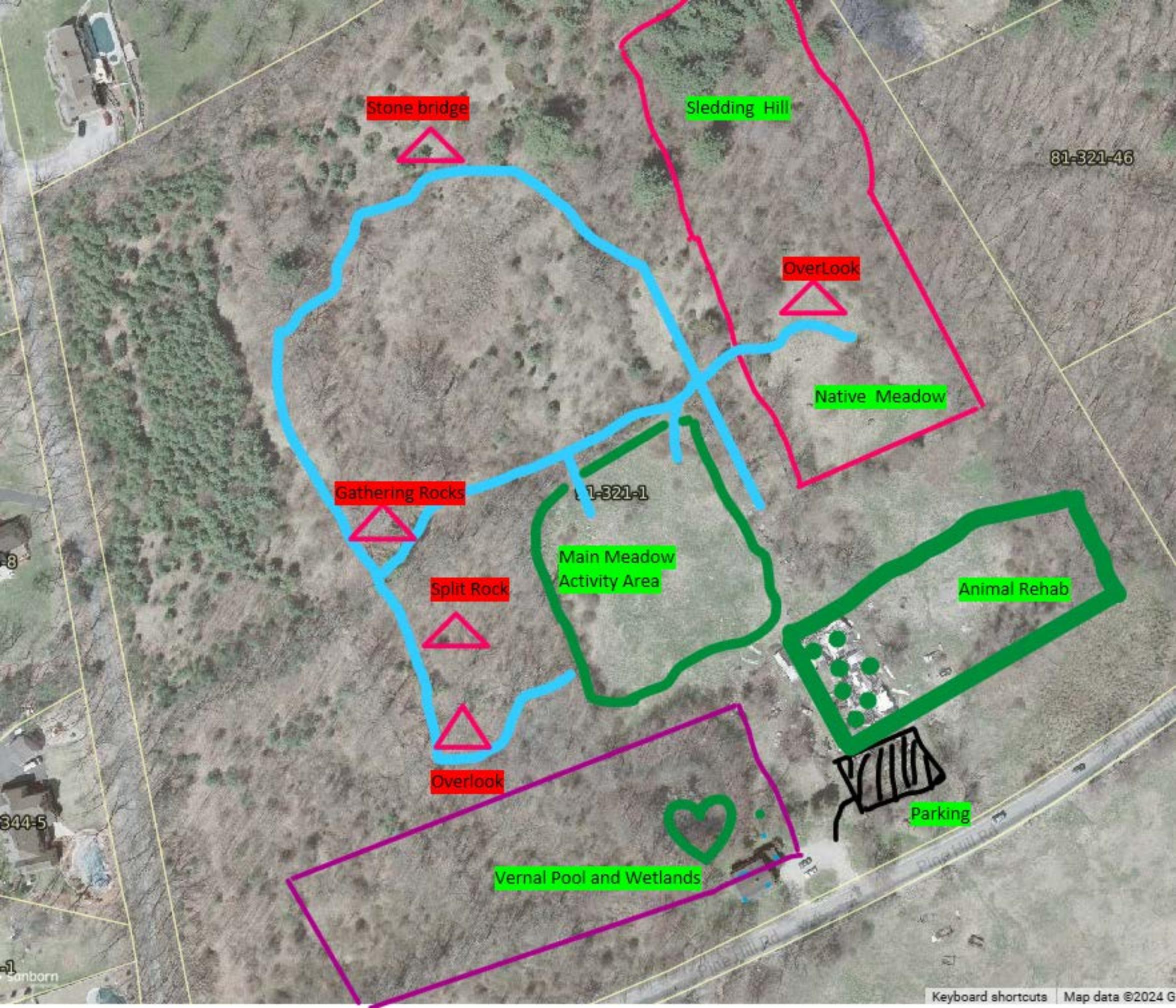
Promoting the walking trails, the preservation of a hay field, growing Pumpkins across the highway and introducing native plants show the commitment to follow the goals that you originally started out withmaintaining open space !

The very idea of trucks driving in and out for a business venture goes completely against the grain of what I thought this committee stood for.

Did the Town and all the good work of the DPW do all this to support a business venture or did they do all that work to maintain the natural look of the original land so that everyone can enjoy it?

I do hope you make the right decision.

Respectfully
Mark Petricone



Stone bridge

Sledding Hill

81-321-46

OverLook

Native Meadow

Gathering Rocks

81-321-1

Main Meadow
Activity Area

Animal Rehab

Split Rock

Overlook

Parking

Vernal Pool and Wetlands