



TOWN OF NEW LONDON, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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DRAFT Minutes of the March 18, 2015 Conservation Commission Meeting

MEMBERS PRESENT: Bob Brown (Chairman), Mike Gelcius, Dan Allan, Terry Dancy, Ruth White, Jane McMurrich

MEMBERS ABSENT: Laura Alexander, Mark Vernon, Andy Deegan

OTHERS: Lucy St. John (Planning & Zoning Administrator), Jeremy Bonin (Bonin Architects), Will Davis (Horizons Engineering), Gary Suprenant (Watermark Construction), John Ryan (New London Resident)

Chair Brown opened the meeting at 8:30am.

Chair Brown welcomed new member, Jane McMurrich to the Conservation Commission. While she had been appointed by the Selectmen, she had not yet been sworn in. Ms. McMurrich was informed that she could participate in the meeting as a member of the Commission, but until sworn in, could not vote.

Permit Applications – Lucy St. John, Planning & Zoning Administrator

Ms. St. John said when an application is submitted to the Town, she invites the applicants to meet with the Conservation Commission to present their plans. There were two applicants present at the meeting that morning.

Betty Ballou – Dock Replacement

Gary Suprenant from Watermark Construction said he was there representing Betty Ballou. She currently has a seasonal, crank-up dock with a hinge that is attached to a concrete pad, which is attached to a boulder. It is currently failing and the boulder is moving. They would like to replace the dock with a dock that is the same size but is the sort that is taken out of the water at the end of the summer. They would like to remove the concrete pad. It is approximately 6' x 3' in size and was permitted to be put in about eight years ago. They plan to break up the concrete and take it away. The new dock will be attached to the current decking.

Mr. Dancy asked if they needed to get into the lake to do this work. Mr. Suprenant said they would and would be using a turbidity curtain while doing the work.

**IT WAS MOVED (Ruth White) AND SECONDED (Terry Dancy) to approve the application for Betty Ballou, as presented by Gary Suprenant from Watermark Construction.
THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Chair Brown said the Conservation Commission would sign off on the application and give it back to Ms. St. John.

Carlson Property , 293 Lamson Lane – Stream Relocation

Will Davis of Horizon Engineering was at the meeting, representing the Carlsons, who were applying for a wetlands permit. He showed an existing conditions plan and pointed out where a perennial stream was located on the property. They are proposing to restore the natural stream channel by removing the manhole and the closed underground culvert, and convey the stream channel that would simulate the upstream section. Mr. Davis said DES funds projects like this all over the State; it creates habitat for vegetation and animals.

Mr. Davis said the reason this approval is being sought is because the owners are planning to take down the current home and build a new one. No one wants a stream under their home or garage. He added that other permit applications will be forthcoming.

Mr. Dancy wanted to know how they could insure that there wouldn't be any pollution of the stream while doing this work. Mr. Davis said the culvert would remain in place while constructing the stone-lined swale. He added that a turbidity curtain would be used as well. When asked, Mr. Davis said the diameter of the current culvert is 24".

Mr. Allen asked if there were any changes to the current plan as compared with the plans they saw a couple months ago. Mr. Davis said there were no changes; only more detail has been added. Mr. Allen noted that the Conservation Commission had approved the concept when they saw the plans previously. Mr. Davis said that DES knows of the project and are in favor of it.

Chair Brown asked what the elevation of the land was from the beginning to the end of the existing culvert. Mr. Davis said at the road it is 528' and 510' at the outlet. It is a little over a 15% slope for the whole site.

Chair Brown asked what kinds of soils were in that area. Mr. Davis said they haven't done soils investigations.

John Ryan, an abutter, said he strongly opposes opening the stream up as there hasn't been any issues in 60 years. He feared a flooding situation, due to the proposal of the stream being moved closer to his property. Mr. Allen said the ditch's water capacity would be greater than the current culvert's capacity.

Jeremy Bonin, Bonin Architects, said he was there also representing the Carlsons. He said that any back-up of water would go towards the back of Lamson Lane. The 100' long culvert under the road wasn't built to any specifications and is a danger to all the properties, not just those near the Carlson's. Mr. Bonin said it is a bad situation and should be resolved in some manner. The State's approved method is an open culvert.

Mr. Davis said significant work was done on Lamson Lane recently. This culvert was not addressed during that project but the Town did add some rip-rap that is meant to handle water. The culvert under Lamson Lane would remain. Mr. Davis said that Mr. Lee, Public Works Director, supports this approach. They are not changing the amount of water going through the area, they are just changing the flow from going through a culvert to an open stream.

Mr. Ryan said that he and John Wilson looked at the culvert and both agreed that it didn't need to be changed, as it was working fine as it was. Mr. Davis noted that the open channel would take more water than the culvert.

Mr. Ryan said if they are taking the house down, why not move the new house over a few feet to avoid the stream. Mr. Davis said there are some constraints with the site including a deed restriction. He said they are trying to avoid getting variances and want to create a better environmental situation. Mr. Ryan was concerned with the proximity of the stream to his property, as proposed in the plan.

Ms. St. John said abutters were notified in December when this first came about. Mr. Ryan thought he should have been notified again. Mr. Davis said he spoke with DES about this. They are going to send out another notification although they are not required to do so by the State. They are not required to send a notification if meeting with a town's Conservation Commission.

Mr. Gelcius wondered if putting a higher grade to the channel near Mr. Carlson's property would prevent water from going to the South side in a storm event. Mr. Davis said this would be possible but it would require the alignment being shifted a bit. The capacity of the channel, as presented, is higher than the culvert and said it wouldn't overtop during a storm event.

Mr. Ryan thought it would be better to re-design the new garage instead of moving the brook. Mr. Bonin said there wouldn't be sufficient room on the property to build and the Carlsons are not interested in building a

home on top of a stream. It is unknown what the state is of the 100' long culvert on the property. The State has said that their proposal is the better environmental solution.

Mr. Ryan said he prefers a straight shot for the water and not a meandering design. Ms. St. John noted that natural streams are in a meandering shape. Daylighting the stream in this way is the most environmentally conscious way of dealing with this issue, per DES.

Mr. Allen asked Mr. Ryan if a vertical wall on his end of the stream forcing any flow to go another way would be acceptable to him. Mr. Ryan said he wouldn't want to look at such a wall on his property. Mr. Allen said he wouldn't be able to see it.

Chair Brown said the Conservation Commission was being asked to sign the application so it would be considered an expedited review, taking a maximum of 30 days for DES to review it; they would also be waiving their right to intervene. Ms. St. John said they could choose not to sign it and so it would not be an expedited review. Instead, it would take a maximum of 75 days for DES to review the application.

Mr. Davis said they could have submitted the application directly to the State, but wanted to bring it to the Town first so they would know what their plans were.

IT WAS MOVED (Terry Dancy) to recommend approval of the application as presented.

There was no second to the motion.

IT WAS MOVED (Mike Gelcius) AND SECONDED (Dan Allen) to take no action on the application without writing a letter to DES. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

Mr. Ryan was encouraged to send his concerns to DES regarding this application.

Minutes of February 18, 2015

IT WAS MOVED (Mike Gelcius) AND SECONDED (Dan Allen) to approve the minutes of February 18, 2015, as circulated. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

Terms

Chair Brown asked the members whose terms were going to be up to contact Ms. Hallquist if they are interested in being reappointed.

Fires and Camping on Conservation Land

Chair Brown said there have been issues concerning campfires and/or camping on Town land. He thinks they need to do something about this but didn't want to outlaw camping entirely. He found that there is an RSA saying camping is not allowed on Town lands without written permission. Perhaps this needs to be on the Town's website and the Conservation Commission's website. He would rather do this than put signs up all over the place alerting people that camping is prohibited.

There was some discussion about the current access concerns at Clark Lookout. The owner of the property the Town must cross to gain entrance to the lookout (on which an easement with the Town and Ausbon-Sargent Land Trust exists) has removed signs and tape saying "Keep Out" but a lock remains on the gate, prohibiting access to the lookout by vehicle. Chair Brown said the Town would rather solve this issue without lawyers and they are attempting to communicate with the property owner. The owner, who claimed they were afraid of dangerous trees falling on visitors, told the Town to stay off the property after the Town offered to go in and trim branches and look at the condition of the trees. Chair Brown said that the Town was considering offering to hire a licensed forester to go in and look at the trees to determine if there was any danger. He didn't foresee anything exceptionally dangerous existed in the area.

Memberships

Chair Brown said the Conservation Commission supports Ausbon-Sargent and in past years they have joined at the \$500 membership level, which they have budgeted for this year. He noted the other organizations the Conservation Commission supported, including NH Association of Conservation Commissions (about \$300), NH Forest Society (\$50), and the American Tree Farm (\$100). These memberships were coming due and the Conservation Commission agreed to continue with the support. Chair Brown said he would ask Wendy Johnson (Finance Officer) to send the checks soon.

Easements and Land Acquisitions

Chair Brown said he met with Debbie Stanley (Ausbon-Sargent) and Andy Deegan (Conservation Commission member) last week to discuss the Town's desirable land list which is comprised of 43 properties they would like to conserve. They are working to possibly help a land-owner clean a lot of scrap metal and debris so that they could purchase the property to conserve it.

Mr. Allen asked if the acquisition of trail easements through the Mary Haddad resource (a new fund bequeathed to the Town by Mary Haddad for Recreation and conservation of open lands). He said he was thinking particularly about Mrs. Baxter's property. Chair Brown said that would be a good discussion to have with Mr. Vernon, who would be back at the next meeting.

Trail Maps

Chair Brown said there was a possibility of having an intern to help with mapping. They have had four applicants for the additional intern position (three college students and one person outside of Colby-Sawyer). They are evaluating the resumes and will work with Ms. Alexander as she has valuable information to provide. They were hopeful that the trail intern from last summer would return as well.

Mr. Allen said he has agreed to go back over the Clark Pond trails with a GPS when the snow is off so he can see the treadway. Chair Brown suggested this project may be a good introduction of the trails to a new intern.

Beaver Pipe Update

Mr. Gelcius said the flow is good and seems to be fine at Low Plain. He hadn't looked at the one behind the old Middle School.

Wood Duck Box Project

Mike Gelcius reported that the Elkins Fish & Game Club members had completed the cleaning and repairs to the wood duck boxes on Beaver Pond at Low Plain, and at Kidder Marsh and on Pleasant Lake. Ruth White said she sent a photo and information to the Intertown Record about this project. She would also send the same information to the Messenger.

Merrimack County Department of Corrections

Chair Brown said he has six confirmed dates for the remainder of the year for workers to assist with trail work. He believed Mr. Vernon had some projects in mind that would involve moving lumber a distance. Mr. Allen said he had a project in mind for two of the days.

There was discussion of the possibility to make a trail handicapped accessible. With the help of these workers and interns, perhaps this was something that they could work towards. Mr. Allen thought the Norman Trail would be a good candidate for such a trail. Ms. White said she would speak with Mr. Vernon about this and the possibility of the Davis Path becoming appropriate for a motorized wheelchair. Mr. Gelcius thought that this was a good possibility as most of the path is hard-pack; some alterations would need to be made to the bridge to make it passable with a wheelchair.

Events

Ms. White thought they might want to consider offering spring walks. She can't do them this year but was hoping perhaps Mr. Vernon would like to. It has been quite a while since this has been done. If anything, she

thought it was good PR to put it out there that the Conservation Commission was active. She suggested the Woodcock Walk. Mr. Allen said he would be happy to do a walk about the flowers on the Clark Pond trail.

Chair Brown suggested they partner with other organizations, such as Ausbon-Sargent so they don't get into competition with them. Ms. White said they should discuss this at the next meeting when Mr. Vernon and Mr. Deegan would be present.

The next meeting was scheduled for April 15, 2015 at 8:30am.

**IT WAS MOVED (Dan Allen) AND SECONDED (Mike Gelcius) to adjourn the meeting.
THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 9:56am.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristy Heath, Recording Secretary
Town of New London