



TOWN OF NEW LONDON, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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CONSERVATION COMMISSION AUGUST 20, 2008

Present: Terry Dancy, Dale Conly, Bob Brown, Vicki Koron, Ruth White, Peter Stanley.

Terry Dancy opened the meeting at 1 p.m., and the Conservation Commission addressed 9 areas of business during the meeting.

Messenger Property on Pleasant Lake

George Pelletieri and Brittany Wolf attended the meeting to present a preliminary idea of the Messengers' proposed restoration of the shoreline at their home on Lakeshore Drive. George Pelletieri opened with a brief summary of his recent work on the Governor's Committee to revise the Comprehensive Shore-land Protection Act, with an emphasis on reducing impervious surfaces, and he will be conducting workshops for DES on shore land restoration. His company encourages shore land owners to direct activities toward restoration of the shore line, and that includes the project they were presenting today. He added that New London is the only community in the state that does not allow any disturbance within the fifty foot setback, and he would like to see the regulation changed to allow some projects that include restoration of the shoreline within that setback.

For this project, they presented some photos and preliminary drawings of the plan to remove some of the existing turf area, relocate the large natural boulders to their original location, build a retaining wall and put a perched beach behind it. Terry Dancy said the regulations would not permit them to create a beach. George Pelletieri said they will be removing the beach that is there, and replacing it with one further back. Peter Stanley said they would have to eliminate more beach than they are creating. George Pelletier indicated that he understood that. The Messengers will be creating a smaller beach that would be perched—that is, raised behind the 18-inch high retaining wall and graded away from the water so that sand does not runoff into the water.

Peter Stanley said that the material presented today is insufficient for the Conservation Commission to comment one way or the other. The Commission really needs to see the existing conditions plus the proposal including setbacks, a tree inventory, etc. George Pelletieri agreed, emphasizing that this is just preliminary, to get a sense of how the Conservation Commission feels about it. Terry Dancy said there is the appearance of a natural beach here, and owners are permitted to do maintenance every six years on that. George Pelletieri reiterated that the owners would like to improve things by replacing that beach with a perched beach—one that would be raised 18-inches behind the retaining wall at or above the seasonal high water mark, and pitched away from the lake.

Peter Stanley suggested it would be inappropriate for the Conservation Commission to consider a project without having all the requirements shown on the plan. Otherwise, they would just be guessing. Ruth White asked, other than saying that restoration is a good idea, what else can the Conservation Commission do today.

Terry Dancy asked how much planting they propose to do. George Pelletieri said owners plan extensive plantings of natural trees and shrubs. Peter Stanley clarified that they can plant any amount of native species, and they can build a retaining wall with a permit. The perched beach would require a variance, and additional sitting areas, patio etc. would not be permitted. Also, he said they can have only one access to the water. He recommended that the Conservation Commission not take a position on this today, and that applicants plan their redevelopment in a way that more closely complies with the regulations.

George Pelletieri asked about the plan to move the large boulders back to their original location, and putting native plantings where the boulders are now. Peter Stanley said a temporary access to the waterfront would be allowed by special exception in order to do something that is permitted. Conservation Commission members pointed out that moving those boulders would require heavy machinery and expressed concern that the process would create more disturbance than it would alleviate. George Pelletieri said their current location is impacting the large trees there, and his idea of restoration is to put things back to where they were.

Peter Stanley said the Conservation Commission is looking for a closer degree of compliance with the regulations, including increased woodland buffer. He acknowledged that New London's regulations prohibit disturbance in the fifty foot setback, and he will be proposing amending that so that it complies with the State's regulations.

Dale Conly asked what the owners' motivation is in doing all this. George Pelletieri said they wish to improve the appearance, reduce maintenance by replacing some of the extensive lawn area with more natural woodland. He suggested it would be unfortunate to lose an opportunity to make a significant improvement. Dale Conly said he would not want applicants to get the impression that the Conservation Commission does not want to see more native plantings, but he agrees that moving those boulders would create a great disturbance. Peter Stanley suggested they remove the current beach, and put the perched beach closer to the water with a retaining wall, and a single access to the waterfront. He suggested if owners are going to the trouble of redeveloping, they conform to the legal standards. He pointed out that as it is, the grass is not creating an erosion problem, and it would be best to leave it alone unless the plan calls for substantial improvement. Terry Dancy agreed, saying that the Conservation Commission's concern regarding lawns on the waterfront is not with the grass itself, but with the fact that people add fertilizers to it. The only guarantee that will not happen is if there are native shrubs planted next to the lake

Conservation Commission members suggested that applicants return with more definite plans, and in the meantime, a site visit will be scheduled.

Minutes

Approval of the July 16 minutes was deferred until a quorum can be present. Bob Brown noted that he will have an amendment to the second paragraph on page 2. "10 or 15 acres" in the third line should be amended to read 10% or 15%.

Ruth White moved to approve the final version with corrections of the August 6 minutes. Vicki Koron seconded. No further discussion. Motion unanimously approved.

Gutgsell Building/Dental Offices on Newport Road

Conservation Commission members agreed that renovations taking place here represent a decided improvement to the property. From a parcel that was entirely hard pack, impervious surface, they now have at least the minimum threshold of 35% green space. They are about to begin phase 2, an addition to the back of the building that will provide leased office space. They have met parking requirements. Peter Stanley noted that there is a wetland immediately behind the site, but they have created two rain gardens to catch the additional runoff before it reaches that wetland. Conservation Commission members asked that the record reflect that they have no opposition to the plans as they were presented at this meeting.

Shultz Conservation Land

Terry Dancy reported that the Board of Selectmen has gone along with the decision to pay \$220,000 for this parcel, and they (Selectmen) have signed the Purchase & Sales agreement. Peter Stanley reported at this meeting that he has been unable to reach Eric Shultz to have him come in and sign that agreement as well, but will continue trying. On Thursday, he will be reviewing the draft deed with the attorney. At that point they can proceed with the closing, at which Eric Shultz will present the deed to the Town, and the Town will present a check to the Shult'z. However, as he said, he cannot reach them by phone this week. Terry Dancy suggested the Commission go ahead and proceed as though the Shultz's plan to go forward.

Pratt Land (abutting Low Plain)

Peter Stanley reported that the Pratts are interested in selling this parcel. He said it is 20+ acres, and appraised for \$85,000. He added that the Pratts indicated they would like to get \$100,000 for it. Conservation Commission members commented that this does include a wetland that would not be buildable anyway. It also includes enough upland for one (possibly two) house lots. Terry Dancy pointed out that the upland may be worth \$85,000 in and of itself, and he suggested the possibility that the Conservation Commission purchase the parcel, divide off the wetland, and sell the upland to recover the cost. Vicki Koron pointed out that the net result would be the same as it is now, since the wetland would not be buildable anyway. Members agreed on these points:

- This parcel has been on the Master Plan list for years, and it would be remiss if the Conservation Commission took no action at all in response to owner's willingness to sell.
- If the Conservation Commission does decide to purchase it, it should be with the idea of protecting the whole. The wetland is already protected. Plus, acquiring the whole parcel fills in the space "between" two pieces that the Town already owns. (That is, the Town's two pieces touch at their corners now, and this parcel would fill that space out up to Route 11.)

- At some point in the past, residents approved spending money to put an easement on this parcel.

Terry Dancy will bring this to Les Norman's attention, and at that point one or two representatives from the Conservation Commission will speak with the Pratts about their timeline. Specifically, would the owners be willing to allow a year to pass while the Conservation Commission does some private fundraising for at least part of the purchase price? Peter Stanley suggested this contact be made within the next 30 days. Conservation Commission members also agreed that in deference to Selectmen's wishes, Jessie Levine will be informed that the Pratts have approached the Commission, and this is under discussion.

Trails

Bob Brown reported that the trail between Pleasant Street and the former middle school now has 650 feet of new boardwalk. In addition, he has replaced the old bridge with a new one including steps and railing. Also, he has built improved, more level, ramps at either end of the bridge to the ball field. He added that he removed the old bridge that had fallen in the water there. Finally, he added the remaining two sections of boardwalk to the section of trail between that bridge and the ball field. At this point, he has used up all the money, and Les has told him not to spend more this year. Altogether, he estimates they have spent about \$1200 on this work, stating that the boardwalk sections consisting of 2 x 4 and 2 x 4 x 8, plus nails, cost about \$19/section or \$1.65/linear foot. He said in most places he was able to simply lay the new boardwalk over the old, using that old for foundation. Conservation Commission members agreed that that is a reasonable price.

In addition, Bob Brown said he was able to borrow a brush cutter from Richard Lee and has cleared 700 foot lengths of brush on either side of this trail. He mentioned that the signs at either end of this trail are badly faded. He is not sure if they have rotted or just need painting. Terry Dancy will take a look at that. In addition, members observed that the main sign at Low Plain is tilting.

He said he would like to make completion of this trail work a priority for next year. That would include finishing the 150-feet of boardwalk replacement on the main trail, with an estimated cost of \$200 or \$250, and replacing the boardwalk on the western loop of this trail with an estimated cost of \$1200. He would like to have more volunteers, though he noted and Commission members agreed that Bob Lavoie and Jerry Gold have been outstanding in their assistance with trail work. He has spoken with Bill Ross who indicated that boy scouts may be able to do some brush cutting and bridge building, and Chad Denning of the Recreation Department may be able to provide some funding.

Lastly, Bob Brown advised the Commission that all five locks on their gates have been replaced and are keyed alike. These include the two at Low Plain, one at Messer Pond, one at Bog Road, and one at Clark Lookout.

Budget

Conservation Commission members agreed to make the following budget request for 2009:

Advertising—level fund at \$400.

Dues (NH Assoc. of Conservation Commissions)—level fund at \$250.

Trail maintenance. Members agreed that there are three priorities for next year: The work described by Bob Brown on the Kidder-Cleveland Trail, the work needed at the Bog, the stream crossing near the pond at Low Plain. (Also, Bob Brown and Peter Stanley will reinstall the beaver pipe by the beaver dam in April.) In conclusion, they agreed to increase the budget for trail maintenance from \$2000 to \$3500.

ASLPT—level fund at \$500.

Water Analysis—level fund at \$200.

Surveys—decrease from \$4000 to \$2000. Peter Stanley advised that they have completed survey needs at Low Plain, but other properties that need surveying include putting together the existing surveys for the two Mengeles parcels, and the balance of Philips Preserve.

Forestry Plans—level fund at \$3000.

Clark Pond Easement Monitoring--\$2000.

Photos and Laminating—level fund at \$100.

Trail maps at trailheads—level fund at \$200.

Web site—level fund at \$150.

Members agreed that in making this request, they should be prepared with narratives describing work already done, amount of time spent by volunteers, and the interaction with other organizations as the New London Recreation Department. Bob Brown volunteered to put together a narrative describing that.

As it is not clear that the Commission will get around to forestry management plans next year, if anything must be cut in the budget, it should be that line item.

Master Plan

At this point, everyone has submitted his or her assigned narrative, with the exception of some of the tables. Terry Dancy will verify what he has with Les Norman, then get it to Peter Stanley by email so it can be put together.

Conservation Commission members expressed concern that the survey offered by the Planning Board is too long and difficult to take on line, and also that the master plan is already being written before survey results are received and tabulated.

Web Site

Members again agreed that the Conservation Commission's web site is great, but expressed that they would like to see more pictures and an update of projects accomplished such as those described by Bob Brown at this meeting.

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Meeting adjourned at 3:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah A. Denz
Recording Secretary