

**TOWN OF NEW LONDON
CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
DECEMBER 17, 2008**

PRESENT: Les Norman (Chair), Laura Alexander, Dan Allen, Bob Brown, Emma Crane, Bob Crane (volunteer), Terry Dancy, Ruth White.

ABSENT: Dale Conly, Vicki Koron

GUESTS: Andrew Deegan, Jim Ward

MINUTES: The Minutes of the November 19, 2008 meeting were approved as presented.

1. **New Business:** Jim Ward came before the CC to request an exception to the Town wetlands regulations. Mr. Ward owns lot 72 on Everett Park Road in New London and intends to build a house on this land. He presented a lot map, indicating where the ditch and culvert were located on the land. He said that about 40 years ago the Town dug a drainage ditch leading to a culvert diagonally across this property. Then about 5 years ago the Town moved the location of the drainage ditch to another section of this property so as not to interfere with a future home site, but did not completely fill-in the original existing ditch. The part that remained unfilled, measuring about 4-6 feet across and 30 feet long, now contains wetland vegetation, even though it is not a true wetland. Mr. Ward would like permission to fill in this ditch so that he may build a home on this property. He has brought this to the attention of the Zoning Board and was told that as part of the process, this request must be approved by the CC.

After a brief discussion, Mr. Dancy commented that the CC has dealt with similar instances in the past where essentially wetland were created as result of excavation. He said that the CC has always supported the idea of making an exception. Mr. Ward commented that this application has also gone through the State and reviewed by wetland scientists. The CC unanimously agreed that there was no objection to Mr. Ward's request.

2. **Winter Walk:** Ms. White suggested dates in January 2009 for these events. She was looking particularly at Wednesdays from about 9:00 – 11:00A.M, depending on where the walk will take place. These Winter Walks could take place on any of the CC trails, at the discretion of the leader, but she suggested that the trail at Low Plain, due to its popularity with dog owners, be avoided if animal tracking were the focus of the Winter Walk. The following schedule was agreed to:

January 14	Dan Allen,	leader	Snow Shoeing
January 21	Laura Alexander,	leader	Tree Identification
January 31	Andrew Deegan,	leader	Nature Walk

Ms. White mentioned that she thought the Duck Box walk would take place perhaps on February 7, but would discuss this further with Peter Stanley who generally oversees this activity.

She further mentioned that the participants usually meet in the Tracy Library parking lot, unless other arrangements are made by the individual leader, and are generally cancelled in inclement weather.

She reported that in the past these walks have been well attended, although attendance varies from week to week. She further suggested that the calendar for these events continue to be advertised in the Kearsarge Shopper, noting that this was good publicity not only for the walks themselves but also for highlighting the activities which the CC sponsors.

- 3. Displays:** Ms. White commented that she has been doing these since 1995. She suggested that another member of the CC might like to take over this responsibility, introducing fresh ideas. The CC praised her for her efforts and wished that she continue to perform this valuable service. They also formally thanked her for doing a terrific job with the displays, and wanted the Minutes to reflect a vote of thanks to her for her dedication. Ms. White does the displays for three sites: the Bog, Town Hall, and Low Plains. She said that the display at the Bog, in winter, generally focuses on “the bog is not asleep”, highlighting what is happening to the bog during the winter months. This is then followed by a “waiting for spring” theme. Then once spring has arrived, this display must be changed frequently to keep pace with the flora and fauna changes occurring. The Town Hall display is generally changed once a month, highlighting the walks and what is going on in the community that is supported by the CC. The Low Plain display is generally done once or twice a month.

Ms. White requested that when she is away in February that others assume these responsibilities. Mr. Dancy and Ms. Crane will help with putting these displays out in her absence.

- 4. Vernon Right of Way:** Mr. Norman reported that a few weeks ago he received a call from Mrs. Vernon to discuss the rights of way on the Vernon Trail. Mr. Allen told the CC that he had been in discussion with members of the Vernon family about the possibility of obtaining a permanent right of way or conservation easement. His understanding is that the letters of agreement with the Vernon family were ten year limited agreements and have been out of date for two years. Once he is able to meet with members of the family he will report back to the CC. Mr. Dancy reminded the CC that the Vernons, on two occasions, had been approached regarding renewals without any agreement being reached.
- 5. Trails:** Mr. Allen reported that Mr. Dancy has made a sign which is now posted on the Clark Pond Trail which reads:
 - Clark Pond
 - End of Trail
 - Private Property Ahead

Mr. Allen also reported that he has been measuring for bridges along the Clark Pond Trail. There are two bridges needed, both about 20-25 feet in length. He will attempt to see if he might be able to get some discarded telephone poles to use to span these sites. Since they will be a single span, a wetlands permit will not be needed. Mr. Dancy wondered how these poles would get into the sites. Mr. Allen commented that one was near the road, therefore using a truck, assuming the ground is frozen, would not be a problem. The other site would require crossing some rough ground so some leveling would be required by a tractor. A snowmobile could then be utilized along with a sled to bring the log into the crossing. Mr. Dancy mentioned that there were several old poles at the stump dump. Mr. Allen said he would look into this.

Ms. White asked if Natalie Davis had told Mr. Dancy about the number of trail closing signs that will be needed at Low Plain. She thought that four were needed and that it would be good to have them prior to March, before the wood ducks return. Mr. Dancy agreed to do four signs with 2 inch lettering saying TRAIL CLOSED, along with Mr. Brown.

Ms. White also asked if anyone has a sign with an arrow on it, which George Green could use. She also mentioned that she got the reference to the Geocache removed so that it is no longer on the on the web site.

Mr. Brown mentioned that the west loop of the Kidder Cleveland Club Trail was in rough shape with a lot of the planks rotted through. He said that Chad Denning of the Recreation Department, perhaps with the Boy Scouts, has been working on parts of this, but he said that there is still major work to be done. Three of the four bridges either need to be replaced or require major renovation. He estimates that it will take about a \$1000 to complete the project. Ms. White added that there were other bridges that were also in need of repair. She identified that on the Lyon Brook Trail at least four are in need of repair.

Mr. Brown reported that he had repaired three signs behind the parking lot at the Middle School, one on the fence, one across from the ball park, and one on _____ Street. He said that Mr. Dancy is going to give him instructions in sign-making, using the router. which was jointly purchased by two previous CC members and Mr. Dancy several years ago.

With regard to the Messer Pond trail, Ms. Crane inquired whether or not the old truck body had been removed. Mr. Allen reported that it had not yet been removed, but Mr. Brown and Mr. Allen thought they might be able to accomplish this once the ground froze.

6. **Budget:** Mr. Norman reported that the Budget Committee did not reinstate the budgeted \$50,000 land purchase fund item for 2009 which the CC had included in the CIP. Removing the \$50,000 from CIP will be for 2009 only. The Budget Committee did say, however, that all the committee members were in favor of what the CC does by way of preserving Town land. He hoped that the Minutes of that meeting reflected that

consensus. Mr. Dancy suggested that if the official Minutes of that meeting do not contain that acknowledgement, that they be revised to include it.

Mr. Norman asked the members whether or not to ask for a Warrant Article requesting money for the easement on Clark Pond at this time of budgetary pressures. He thought the amount which would be requested would be about \$1500. After some discussion it was decided to first determine the exact amount of money needed to be asked for and then make the decision regarding what should be included in the Warrant Article. Ms. Crane asked when the decision regarding the inclusion of a Warrant Article would need to be made. Mr. Norman was not sure but said he would check on this date. If need be, a special CC meeting can be held, adhering to notification of public regulations, once this information is obtained.

7. **CC Report:** Mr. Norman presented the draft of the annual CC Report to the group. He wrote this report around the theme “then and now”, following Jessie Levine’s request. After a reading of the draft report, suggestions for clarity and accuracy were made regarding the various parcels of land and easements mentioned in the draft. Mr. Norman will meet with Peter Stanley to make sure all the facts are accurately stated. Additionally, the following suggestions were made concerning further points of information which could be included in the report:
 - New web site, with new trail maps, is now available. These maps are based on GPS technology.
 - New conservation easements
 - The addition of new properties
 - Clark Lookout
 - Identify any parcels of land that were mentioned in earlier reports that have now been acquired
 - Future parcels of land on which easements might be obtained

Mr. Norman said he will circulate a new draft to the members via e-mail. Mr. Dancy asked when the report was to be submitted. Mr. Norman said it was to be submitted by January 9.

8. **Master Plan:** Mr. Norman suggested that since Peter Stanley was not present, this discussion be postponed until the next meeting.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:15P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen K. Colby