

TOWN OF NEW LONDON
CONSERVATION COMMISSION
JULY 20, 2005

PRESENT: Laura Alexander, Dan Allen, Dale Conly, Bob Crane, Emma Crane, Terry Dancy, Vicki Koron, Les Norman, Peter Stanley, Ruth White.

Les Norman opened the meeting at 1 p.m. Fourteen items of business were addressed at this meeting.

1. Minutes – June 15, 2005

On page two, paragraph one under Walks, “Nat Allen” was changed to read “Nat Davis.” On page three, paragraph two, the date of the Morgan Hill walk was changed from August 15 to August 13. Motion made, seconded and approved to accept the minutes as amended.

2. Easement Monitoring

Three of the Town’s conservation easements—*Clough* of 53.06 acres, *Clough* of 20.60 acres, and *Kidder/Cleveland* of 16.20 acres, were acquired with some funding from the New Hampshire Land Conservation Investment Program (LCIP), and that organization, now united with LCHIP, requires monitoring every ten years.

Accordingly, the Cranes of this Commission, Dick Cavallaro, Steve Walker of LCIP, and Sue Clough (for the two Clough easements), walked the properties. At this meeting, the Cranes reported that the easements are basically okay, and that Steve Walker was favorably impressed with all the Commission is doing, including the web site. Bob Crane noted that the Kidder-Cleveland-Clough Trail begins at the boundary of the conservation easement there, and Terry Dancy added that the Commission does have permission now to extend that trail down through the properties. The trail will not go back into the agricultural part of Spring Ledge Farm.

Emma Crane reported that the grass is very high on the Kidder/Cleveland trail, and though it is too wet to mow now, perhaps it could be combed back. Dan Allen said he has organized a work party for Sunday for the bridge on that trail. Also, the Cranes reported that Sue Clough has asked about the possibility of putting a boardwalk on some of the low areas at the back of her property.

3. Frank and Karen Voellman, Forest Acres Road-Proposed boardwalk access to Messer Pond

Bob Stewart of RCS Designs, and Gary Suprenant of *Watermark*, presented this proposal to the Commission. For the presentation, Bob Stewart provided:

- o The plan showing that the Voellmans’ property includes a long shoreline on Messer Pond, but that that is separated from the house by a large wetland. The proposed boardwalk will cross over that wetland, allowing access to the lake.
- o A USGS map of the property.
- o The tax map showing abutting property owners including the Town’s conservation property, and the Ellisons’.
- o An aerial photograph showing the type of vegetation existing there.

He noted that the wetlands had been delineated on this property prior to its development. It is a forested and shrubby wetland, all very wooded, predominantly by alders. The Voellmans’ house is in the southwesterly corner of the property. The proposed boardwalk would allow them access to their shoreline on Messer pond; it is shown on the plan in the southeasterly corner of the property. In response to Dan Allen’s question, he said the only structures on the property right now are the house, and a very old, small shed.

He went on to point out that a brook, approximately four-feet wide, crosses through the wetland. The proposed walkway is 195-feet long, four-feet wide, and will cross over the wetland and the brook. He explained that the reason they are proposing it with two angles, rather than as a straight line, is that it must meet a dock on the lake,

and stay twenty-feet from the abutting property line. Basically, the boardwalk will extend from a high point in the wetland buffer, over the wetland, to a highpoint on the shore.

He said that as this is a wetlands crossing, it will require a special exception in accordance with Article XIII, §E-1 of the New London Zoning Ordinance. On July 11, Sam Voss of RCS Designs, did present the application to the Zoning Board, noting that in that application package, they had included copies of the plan for this Commission. (Conservation Commission members said they have not seen this until now.)

Article XIII, §E of the New London Zoning Ordinance requires that an application for a special exception for a wetlands crossing be referred for comment to the Conservation Commission, Soil Conservation Service and the New Hampshire Wetlands Board thirty days prior to the Zoning Board's hearing on that special exception. However, Bob Stewart explained that the State Wetlands Board's requirement for this will be a Standard (not expedited) Dredge and Fill permit. The cost to the applicants for that will be quite high, and they had hoped to get a sense of the ZBA before going forward with that State work. On the 11th, the ZBA tabled the application until the Conservation Commission has had opportunity to review it, and the State application has been submitted. It is his understanding, that the Zoning Board may, after hearing comments from this Commission, approve the special exception with the condition that the State permit is obtained (the State application will have been filed thirty days prior to the date of the ZBA hearing).

Peter Stanley clarified that applicants will not actually be filling in any wetland. Bob Stewart confirmed that, and said this will be an elevated walkway using as much natural material as possible. Peter Stanley said it is his understanding that there will be no cutting in the 100-foot buffer to that wetland. There will be only a path—no other disturbance—through the buffer, leading to the boardwalk. Bob Stewart confirmed that, but did ask that there be provision allowing some cutting of two-inch or less saplings. Peter Stanley said pruning and trimming is allowed in the 100-foot buffer, but they may not take any trees down.

Gary Suprenant's company *Watermark* will be doing the construction of the boardwalk, and he provided some details: The boardwalk will be three- to four-feet high, and four-feet wide. Bob Stewart clarified that that will be three to four-feet high from the normal high water mark; the level of the water does fluctuate. The point is that animals will be able to cross under it. The horizontals for the boardwalk will be 2"x4" aluminum tubing, and the decking will be cedar with ¾" spaces between the planks, allowing light to get to the vegetation below the walk. The legs or posts will be either 4"x4" pressure treated wood or 1½" galvanized steel pipes. They will be placed with ten or twelve foot spans between them. No machinery will be used in this construction. All work will be done by hand.

Emma Crane asked how tall the plants are there. Bob Stewart said any trees are just saplings, mostly alder, otherwise there are wetland grasses, typically two to three feet high.

Members confirmed that this will be for private use only, and only for pedestrian traffic. Ruth White asked if a four-foot width is necessary. Peter Stanley said the ordinance allows four-foot wide walks in the buffer zone (though this is the wetland, not the buffer). He suggested that the Commission could suggest another number, if it wishes.

He opened discussion of a handrail. Bob Stewart said the owners do not particularly want a handrail. They would like the boardwalk to be invisible. Peter Stanley suggested that their insurance company may require a handrail, and that could be made optional in the Commission's remarks on the application.

Both he and Terry Dancy noted that there have seen similar applications in previous years—one for a property on Lamson Lane and another on the opposite side of Pleasant Lake from Lamson Lane.

Terry Dancy noted that if the walkway is elevated, it would not really change the environment there. He asked which is the more appropriate material for the posts going into the muck. He has not seen an analysis for the use of pressure treated wood in water, but the copper (in pressure treated wood?) would be reasonably stable there. He would prefer to see the wooden posts. He questioned using galvanized steel in the acidic water there. Gary

Suprenant agreed with that, but pointed out the difference in size between the wooden posts and the galvanized pipes which would be only 1½” in diameter. He said the decision on that may have to come down to cost. Peter Stanley agreed that that choice may end up being a cost or labor issue.

Les Norman said the Conservation Commission needs to be precise about what it is approving. He summed up the Commission’s recommendations so far:

- o The boardwalk will be up to four-feet wide.
- o It may include handrails if desired.
- o It will be elevated a minimum of two feet (above normal high water).
- o The supporting posts will be either 1½” galvanized pipes or 4”x4” pressure treated lumber.

Terry Dancy cautioned that using steel pipe with an aluminum framework will accelerate the corrosion of the steel. He asked how deep down they will drive the posts, saying that if wooden posts are used, those would really be sitting in the muck. Gary Suprenant said they will drive the posts down to refusal. If they use the galvanized pipes, those will include a cast foot; the pipe will pass through the foot, and then they would tighten it into position.

Dan Allen asked if plastic posts would be available for this purpose. Those would be environmentally inactive. He has seen a heavy duty plastic used for decking. Bob Crane suggested plastic shields around the posts. Gary Suprenant said he has seen that used for decking, but not for posts.

Terry Dancy asked if they need a letter for the wetlands board application. Bob Stewart said it would be helpful to have a positive comment from the Conservation Commission. Peter Stanley said no comment from the Conservation Commission is taken by the Wetlands Board to mean that the Commission has no objections. Usually the Conservation Commission only submits a letter to the Wetlands Board if it has objections to an application. In general, the Conservation Commission would prefer to see nothing constructed in or over a wetland.

4. Trails

Dan Allen has organized a work party for Sunday. Workers will meet at 1 p.m., in the municipal parking lot across from Tracy Library.

He distributed to members his “NLCC Guidance for Marking Trails with Blazes,” and reported that one of the trail adopters objects to using trapezoidal blazes. It is not clear why. Conservation Commission members agreed that unless someone is blazing on his or her own property, or can come up with a good reason for not using the standard blazing, the agreed upon standard should be adhered to. The trail blazing should be uniform.

Bob Crane opened some discussion of whether or not double blazes should be used where a trail turns. He cited a recent experience of using a trail which was blazed with the tops of metal cans with stripes painted across the centers. The direction of the stripes, that is, whether they were facing the hiker horizontally, vertically or something in between, was random, depending on how the metal circle happened to be nailed to the tree. In other words, the stripes were not directional.

From Dan Allen’s Guidelines: “The adopted trapezoidal blaze (6” tall x ¾” at the top x 2½” at the bottom) is intended to be tipped from the vertical to indicate the direction in which the trail turns. The angle that the blaze tips should be proportional to the change in direction. If the trail makes a right angle turn to the left, then the blaze should tip 90-degrees to the left. If the trail turns 45-degrees to the right, then the blaze should tip 45-degrees to the right. The tipped blaze should be close to the corner, not some distance before.”

That is consistent with the Greenway’s trail blazing system, and Peter Stanley said the Greenway’s blazing system is ideal. It was clear to understand even before he read anything about the Greenway’s system. Terry Dancy said that is the blazing that is internationally used.

Ruth White suggested a compromise could be used. Dan Allen asked about using double blazes only at trail junctions, not every time there is a change on the trail.

The question is: Does the Commission want to see double or horizontal blazing at trail turns? Terry Dancy said it is a judgment question. Perhaps double blazes could be put in places where people are most likely to get lost. Most of the time, they would not be needed.

Dan Allen said there could be something in the map's narrative about double blazes being present at certain turns, but in general, there should be a minimum of blazes.

Ruth White reported that there are horrendous puddles on the trail between County Road and Great Brook, too big to step across them on rocks. She asked if there is budget for putting boardwalks there.

Les Norman said the budget could support purchase of materials, if volunteer labor is used.

Dan Allen said he has suggested to George Green that they assess what might be done about drainage. Perhaps digging some ditches would alleviate some of the problem. Also, there is the possibility of relocating the trail to a different place. There was a road there.

5. Web Site

Bob Crane said all the trails are on the web site now, but two: Knight's Hill, and the Kidder Trail off Morgan Brook Trail. He pointed out that the latter is in Springfield; he has placed some views of those trails on the web in anticipation of the August 13th walk on Morgan Hill. Question was raised about who maintains them—New England Forestry Foundation? Blazes and signs are missing. Terry Dancy volunteered to make signs. The Conservation Commission will need permission before working on those trails.

Terry Dancy opened discussion of the new trail map. All New London's trails have been mapped with GPS and can be put on an overlay. Funding is available for the new maps; \$6000 has been made from sales of the old trail map. He said that Brian Faughnan has done a simpler map of Wilmot, and Laura Alexander said that he did that on GIS. Members agreed that a simpler map of New London would be good, with contours at 50 m. intervals. Terry Dancy, Laura Alexander and Brian Faughnan will meet on July 28 at 9 a.m. to start work on the new trail map.

6. Invasive Species

Conservation Commission authorized Laura Alexander to have 1000 copies of the Invasive Species brochure printed at Kinko's, for a cost of \$558.

7. CIP

Les Norman refreshed members' memories on the change made last year, which requests that for two years in a row \$150,000 be put into the reserve for conservation land in order to bring the balance up, and a reduced amount each year after that (unless the balance is spent). Members agreed to request no change to that plan this year.

8. Bog

Vicki Koron reported on the results of her May 22 water samplings. All are within the normal range.

9. Phillips Preserve

Peter Stanley said it has been too wet to begin that work. He will see how the weather is in fall; otherwise it will have to be put on hold to next year.

10. Community Center

The Planning Board will meet with the Kearsarge/Lake Sunapee Area Community Center group on Tuesday July 26th. The regular planning board meeting begins at 7:30 p.m.

11. Elkins

Terry Dancy said the Selectmen will be holding a preliminary meeting on the Elkins Study, as part of their regular Select Board meeting on August 8.

12. Granger Ridge Subdivision

Dale Conly reported that the developers have made a number of compromises at the request of this commission and the subcommittee. The number of lots has been reduced from 14 to 11. Terry Dancy added that they have concentrated most of the houses in a better area. Dale Conly said that the septic system has been moved three times, as test pits reflected that the better soils are along the area of the proposed road. As the plans are now, the septic system will be located at the end of the proposed road, behind the hammer-head. There will be one aerobic system for the entire development. They have maintained the 100-foot buffer from the stream as requested, though the stream there is not a mapped one, and the buffer is not required. They have combined some of the driveways into common-driveways.

13. Master Plan-Vision for Conservation

The Conservation Commission agreed that, particularly in light of the Granger subdivision and development proposal and the concerns it has raised, and the fact that any land remaining undeveloped is going to be more problematic, the Town should consider additional limitations for areas with slopes (of a certain degree), and certain types soils. The ordinance should reflect what the Town will accept in those areas, and it can be designed so that the limitations are progressive, that is, become more stringent as slopes become steeper, and soils less conducive to development. Peter Stanley said he has some samples of progressive slope and soil regulations, and Ken McWilliams will do some research into what other Towns are doing in this area. Proposing such a change to the ordinance should all be done within the context of the Master Plan updating.

14. Other

- o Laura Alexander will present the Selectmen with a printed copy and CD of her student's project: *Identifying Conservation Priorities in the Kearsarge/Sunapee Region*.
- o Les Norman suggested there be some consideration to adding the Tracy Golf Course to lands to be considered.
- o The next meeting will be August 17. Laura Alexander will chair.

Respectfully submitted,

S.A. Denz
Recording Secretary