



# TOWN OF NEW LONDON, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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## CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES March 17, 2010

### **PRESENT:**

Andy Deegan (Chairman), Vicki Koron, Emma Crane, Sue Clough, Bob Brown, Laura Alexander, Dan Allen, Terry Dancy

### **ALSO PRESENT:**

Bob Crane, Peter Stanley, Judith Guyer-Almstadt (Recording Secretary)

Community-Based Research Project Students from Colby-Sawyer College (Environmental Studies Department):

Harvey Pine (co-instructor)

Jennifer White (co-instructor)

Jamie Trombley

Hannah White

Hannah Bright

Jeanne Clark

Heather MacIntyre

Andrew Francis

Andy Deegan opened the meeting at 9:00 am.

### **February 17, 2010 Minutes**

Several small errors were brought to the attention of the recording secretary, and once those had been corrected, the Minutes were unanimously approved.

It was moved (Laura Alexander) and seconded (Vicki Koron) to approve the February 17, 2010 Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes. The motion was approved unanimously.

### **Community-Based Research Project Students (instructed by Laura Alexander) from Colby-Sawyer College (Environmental Studies Department):**

Students from the Community-Based Research Project class at Colby-Sawyer College led a discussion about co-occurrence mapping that will be used to develop conservation priorities in town. Co-occurrence mapping is a process by which spatial data layers are overlaid in order to see where more than one criterion for land conservation occurs. Two methods, simple and weighted, were presented, and during the course of the discussion the idea of running the co-occurrence both ways and comparing them was raised. All were in agreement that looking at the results of both analyses would be interesting. Members also discussed and agreed on the weight that each natural resource layer would be given for the weighted co-occurrence. On a scale of 1 to 5, the Commission weighted the resources as follows:

|                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Aquifers                             | 3 |
| FGWA Favorable Gravel Well Areas     | 1 |
| Streams                              | 3 |
| Wetlands                             | 1 |
| Agricultural Soils                   | 5 |
| Open Fields                          | 5 |
| Working Forests (25 acres or larger) | 4 |
| Unfragmented Blocks                  | 1 |
| Supporting landscapes                | 1 |
| Corridors & Abutting Parcels         | 2 |
| Undeveloped Shoreline                | 5 |
| Scenic Views / Resources             | 1 |

It was moved (Sue Clough) and seconded (Vicki Koron) to approve the weight given to each natural resource layer for the weighted co-occurrence. The motion was approved unanimously.

The student group will be in touch soon to arrange a discussion of the analysis.

### **Warrant Article**

Andy expressed his excitement about the Town Meeting and the passing of the Warrant Article 18. Peter said he thought Bob had done a great job speaking, and gave the commission some feedback for the next time they are required to make a presentation at Town Meeting. For example, he said he thought it would be important that people knew the Land Acquisition Fund had a \$500,000 ceiling, and that the Commission's goal was to get to that amount and have it available as they move forward.

Andy said he would like to discuss the Land Acquisition Fund at the next Conservation Commission Meeting. Andy said to the best of his knowledge, the fund could only be used for outright purchases of land, and that in the future other types of projects might arise that need to be funded, for example, easement purpose where the town doesn't have interest.

Terry said he had recently read an article about spending Conservation money for acquisition of assets not located in the town but related to conservation. Andy said that some towns allowed it (e.g., Warner and Sutton) but that the New London Conservation Commission was not technically allowed to use the money for that purpose. Going forward, Andy said he would like to change the policy to include the purchase of conservation easements.

Vicki wanted to know more about the costs that go into an easement. Andy said it depended on whether or not the easement property is a donation or has to be purchased. If it the easement property is a donation, only the stewardship and attorney fees apply. If not, the cost of the property is also applicable.

Bob B. wanted to know if they had a list of protected and unprotected conservation properties owned by the town. Peter said they did, and that it was in the "Master Plan" and readily available. He also said they had a current list of desirable properties worthy of protection.

### **Messer Pond**

Andy said he had forwarded everyone a copy of the questionnaire for Messer Pond. He said the town had voted unanimously to put a conservation easement on that property. Peter said he would complete it for them (like he had for the Clarke's Pond easement) and forward it to the members for review. Andy said he would present it to the Lands committee on April 1<sup>st</sup>.

### **Trails Update**

Dan brought in a box of the microblaster charges to show the members.

He also wanted everyone to know that the Clarke Pond Property was on the North Slope and could still be skied.

### **All other business**

Peter said he was contacted Monday morning by Rich Cook (the Fish and Game person dealing with land protection). Peter said that he (Mr. Cook) was getting ready to go before his Lands team (called the Land Committee in New London) to review the proposal to have an easement on the balance of the property at Low Plain that is not currently under easement. Peter said that during all of his discussions with Fish and Game (1 ½ years ago as well as one other discussion with Rich Cook, and the discussion on Monday) there was no mention of a monitoring contribution. Peter said that they are “smartening up”, however, and have decided that they need a contribution. On Wednesday, Mr. Cook asked Peter what he thought about a \$10,000 monitoring contribution. Peter told him that he thought \$10,000 would be “out of the question.” Mr. Cook discussed it with his Lands Group, and has now come back with a counteroffer: \$5,000 over a two year period, and they (Fish and Game) would contribute the balance to the fund. Peter told Mr. Cook that this figure sounded more reasonable, and that he would present it to the Commission. Peter made the following suggestion to the members. He said that there was a little bit of money in the Conservation Fund which is not subject to Town Meeting approval, but is subject to Board of Selectmen approval. Peter said he would need an opinion from Town Council whether or not the monitoring contribution would qualify as any kind of land acquisition. He said that it was possible the money could be spend out of the Conservation Fund subject to vote and majority approval of the Commission only. Peter suggested taking \$2,500 out of the Conservation Fund, and then next year appropriating \$2,500 through the budget (as a contribution). Peter said he felt it was “a reasonable concept when you consider they are monitoring the easement and perpetuity.”

Peter said he needed to get a sense or a vote from the Commission whether or not they would agree to a \$5,000 monitoring contribution spread over two years. He said if they were in agreement the exact details could be worked out at a future meeting.

Bob B. wanted to know what would happen if they voted this down. Peter said that they might choose not to accept the conservation easement which would be awkward because the land trust wouldn't want to have an easement on half a piece of property that Fish and Game already has an easement on. Furthermore, he said it could have the consequence that in the future no Conservation Group would accept an easement without a significant amount of monitoring contribution.

It was moved (Dan) and seconded (Laura) to agree with the \$5,000 monitoring contribution. The motion was approved unanimously.

Peter said he wouldn't feel comfortable advising the Commission to spend money out of the Conservation Fund for the monitoring contribution without Selectboard approval/without first asking Council whether or not Selectboard approval was required.

Bob B. made sure that the motion (and vote) was subject to Council approval. Peter said that he would be responding affirmatively to Fish and Game that the \$5,000 could be arranged. He said that how it was handled internally was another issue that has to be resolved.

Andy called for a vote, and the motion was approved unanimously.

Peter said that the town had got a \$15,000 grant to evaluate the practicality and process for low-head hydro (micro-hydro) in one of the out-flow dams from Pleasant Lake. As it turns out, the Hayes dam has the potential for some micro/hydro development as it has about 12-foot head, and a reasonable flow of water most of the year. The process for developing micro/hydro is very complicated. The \$15,000 is meant to look into the process to see if there is any sense in doing it at all. It's also making a model for other micro/hydro throughout the State of New Hampshire.

Peter said that he had attended a presentation by Audubon at the Land Use Commission (he is a member via his appointment to the Regional Planning Commission and his appointment from that to the New Hampshire Association of Regional Planning Commissions). Peter said he was sitting on a group that is looking at the whole issue of wetlands regulations and how to tie the wetlands to uplands in a statutory way that makes sense. He said they are looking at wetland buffers (i.e., what should they be, why, and what mechanism should be used for evaluating wetlands to determine if buffers are appropriate). Peter said he found out that since the mid 1700s New Hampshire has lost the least amount of wetlands of all the states in the union (New Hampshire is at 9% since the 1750s and most other states are from anywhere between 25%-50% total wetlands lost). New Hampshire also has the most aggressive wetlands permitting scheme of all states in the union.

It was moved (Laura) and seconded (Dan) to adjourn the Conservation Commission Meeting of March 17, 2010. The motion was approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith Guyer-Almstadt  
Recording Secretary