



TOWN OF NEW LONDON, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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APPROVED Minutes of the October 17, 2012 Conservation Commission Meeting

MEMBERS PRESENT: Bob Brown (Chairman), Dan Allen, Ruth White, Rick Anderson, Sue Clough, Andy Deegan, Terry Dancy, Laura Alexander

MEMBERS ABSENT: Emma Crane, Bob Crane (Webmaster)

OTHERS: David Cook

Chair Brown called the meeting to order at 9:01am. They began the meeting by having Ruth White present the hiking patches for those individuals who hiked each of the town's trails. Those receiving patches were Anita and Michael Gelcius, George Green, Wendy Johnson, Ruth White, and Terry Dancy. Emma, Bob and Gary Crane were also recipients but they were not present at the meeting to get their patch. Photos of the recipients were taken.

Chair Brown brought up the Mark Vernon subdivision on Pingree Road. He has filled out an application for a 100' wetlands crossing for a driveway. The 200 acre family parcel is being divided between the two sons and their children. He showed a map to the Conservation Commission. There was an easement on the property that they believed had expired. Chair Brown said that he spoke with Mr. Vernon about the trails on the land and his continued support of these trails. Mr. Vernon said that he and his family would like to keep the trails available to hikers but after the subdivision, they would need to review each parcel separately to see if this was still the case.

Lucy St. John (Planning & Zoning Administrator) explained that the Vernons came to the Planning Board for a conceptual discussion. At the end of the meeting, they were told they would have to come back to the Planning Board with a formal plan showing what they want to do. They are still working out some family issues before they will be ready to come forward with a plan. She received an email from Mr. Vernon asking about state permits and special exceptions. She had not gotten back to him yet. Ms. St. John noted that the easement had not been signed and there was no book and page number. It was explained that the Vernons are aware that the easement had expired. She said if there is a conservation easement, an abutter needs to be notified of it. Mr. Deegan said that it is actually a declaration of dedication but not a conservation easement. Chair Brown said that it is dated for ten years and there are restrictions included in the declaration.

Mr. Deegan said that they plan to put the driveway across the narrowest portion of the wetland, which is the best place for it to go. Chair Brown noted that the engineering work had been done by Clayton Platt. Mr. Deegan said until they have a completed, full application, the Conservation Commission can't really make a decision on whether they are in favor of the plan or not. Ms. St. John said the State application is different than the town's application. In New Hampshire, it varies from town to town whether the applicants need to get the state permit or the town permit first. It is not consistent.

There was some discussion about the State Wetlands Application and the Conservation Commission's responsibility with regards to their signature being needed for an expedited review. If they don't sign the applications, the State will look at them as a standard review, which will take more time. Mr. Dancy said the Conservation Commission would generally sign off on the things they agreed with. If they didn't agree with something, they would send a letter to the State letting them know why. Mr. Deegan felt that the driveway going across the narrowest portion of the wetland, it was the best solution.

IT WAS MOVED (Dan Allen) AND SECONDED (Terry Dancy) to approve the application for expedited process with NH DES. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

Mr. Dancy added that a number of years ago, their objective was to get permanent approval for trails on the Vernon property. The Vernons, however, have always gone against this. Over the years, they have come back and renewed the permission to cross the land. Mr. Allen said that he spoke with Mr. Vernon who said that it would be up to the individual owners of each parcel of land whether the trails would remain as they are.

Tree-Cutting Requests

Ms. St. John said there were three requests currently: Cundy on Little Lake Sunapee, Kent on Lamson Lane, and Yelton on Bunker Road. She wondered if anyone would have time to go look at the trees in question. Chair Brown thought that it may not be in the best interest of the Conservation Commission to handle the tree-cutting reviews on a long-term basis. Mr. Anderson understood that Ms. St. John was uncomfortable going to look at trees because of the way the ordinance is written and because of time constraints. He has looked at trees in the past and doesn't mind helping out but they need to find a permanent solution. He was not available on an immediate basis.

Chair Brown asked if she had spoken to the Planning Board about this being a Planning Board responsibility. Ms. St. John said she had not as she had only been to one meeting so far. Ms. Clough wondered if they couldn't have a Planning Board and Conservation Commission member go together to look at the trees in question. If the ordinance is confusing and the job may need to go back to the Planning Board, it might be good to have someone from both boards involved. Mr. Anderson said that anyone who wants to cut a tree in the 50' buffer has to draw up a map that shows the trees along with the points in the 50' parcel of water front. It doesn't seem to take that much time and generally it was not that difficult. He didn't think it would necessitate two people.

Ms. White said it should be the Conservation Commission's recommendation to the Planning Board that they find someone who is knowledgeable and has the time to do this. Mr. Anderson said that it isn't a large time commitment but the ordinance does say that it is a Planning Board function. Ms. St. John said that she would look at these three properties and understood that the Conservation Commission was not comfortable reviewing tree-cutting requests. Ms. Clough said she would be willing to be part of a group that goes out to look at trees if they wanted someone from the Conservation Commission to go. Mr. Anderson said that if there was any controversy in whether something should be cut, the Conservation Commission should definitely get involved.

Water Level at Pleasant Lake

Mr. Anderson noted that the people who live on Pleasant Lake can make a request to lower the level of the lake every five years. At the end of March 1st they could apply to the select board and be properly permitted for the level to go down further than it normally would. He anticipated some requests coming in this winter.

September 19, 2012 Minutes

IT WAS MOVED (Laura Alexander) AND SECONDED (Andy Deegan) to approve the minutes of September 19, 2012, as amended. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

On Page 5, one name was misspelled. It should be: David Hennig.

Suggestions by Dave Cook

Mr. Cook said he had some observations after visiting the trails in town. He offered the following suggestions:

Low Plain Trail: Mr. Cook feels it is boring and suggested they remove about 6' of the lower branches of trees at the entrance-way. This would open up the overlook and would not damage the trees.

The bridge in the back part of the trail needed work as it was an eye sore.

Mr. Cook noticed a heavy infestation of Poison Ivey before the ___ Trail. He thought they could create some higher trails that would be interesting. Ms. White said that they used to have some that were beautiful but they were right beside the pond but dogs and people were constantly spooking the Wood Ducks.

Mr. Cook thought the Messer Pond Trail could also be opened up by cutting some low branches. Chair Brown said that is on their wish list but it isn't a priority but they hoped to get to it. Mr. Cook added that he maintains seven private properties that abut conserved land. He thought the Conservation Commission should make it known that this kind of partnership with conserved land is quite beneficial.

Philips Preserve

Mr. Deegan said Ausbon-Sargent's lawyers are supposed to be contacting Town Counsel about the easement. Ms. White asked for clarification of what was going on with this. Chair Brown said that New London's Town Counsel has issue with three items in the easement language and the attorneys are now trying to work out an agreement.

Desirable Land List

Chair Brown said there were 43 properties on their desirable land list. One parcel on Main Street has happened (Cleveland easement) and can be taken off list. Perhaps other properties should be added. Mr. Deegan recalled that Chair Brown wanted the parcel values included. He noted that he had the ability to locate a rough idea of the values of the properties. Mr. Deegan reminded those at the meeting that a land with an easement on it would be a different value than a traditional piece of land.

Chair Brown asked Mr. Deegan if there were other town-owned lands that should be on their future easement list. Mr. Deegan said it is something they need to decide as a group. The lagoons would be a good idea. There is still the issue of the contamination of the sewer being in the area. Ms. Alexander asked if resolving those contaminants would make it difficult to develop. Mr. Deegan said he didn't know as he hadn't been on the property. It was noted that it wasn't wet but was easily accessible.

Philips Preserve Forestry Plan

Pierre Bedard (forester) and Leo Maslin (logger) agreed that an updated forestry plan would be appropriate. They could then go forward with a selective cut. Chair Brown said that he had suggested a selective cut to the Board of Selectmen in the past and now that it is time to move forward with it, he thought they should let them know. He suggested doing a gladed cut to promote habitat. Financially, their goal is to come out of this project even or a little ahead.

Chair Brown said that he spent about 30 minutes speaking at the selectmen's meeting on the forestry plan topic. He spoke of having this become an educational process so people can see how responsible logging could be done. The selectmen were very concerned about the cost of the update and the forestry work. He said explained that the update cost was covered and they hoped to come out even or a bit ahead with the cutting. The update is between \$1,500 and \$1,800.

IT WAS MOVED (Laura Alexander) AND SECONDED (Sue Clough) to move forward with the forestry plan update, at no more than \$1,800, and the selective cutting at the Philips Preserve. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

Ms. Alexander recalled that Mr. Bedard had indicated that this property would be good for a summer cut because it was not wet. Chair Brown didn't remember it that way and thought Mr. Bedard had some concerns with the grade of the property. It was noted that all of these specific details would be in the forestry plan update.

CIP Meeting

Chair Brown felt the CIP meeting was pretty disappointing and saw no enthusiasm from those in attendance. It was clear that the Budget Committee members were very much against contributing to the Land Acquisition

Fund. The last four years they have had an average of \$8,000 per year put into the fund, which is a lot less than it was in prior years. Their initial request for this year was \$25,000 and there was talk that it would maybe be around \$10,000.

Chair Brown said that there was a question brought up as to why the Conservation Commission had chosen the \$500,000 cap on the fund. It was noted that after the values of the properties on the desirable list were determined, this amount could be better defended. Mr. Dancy said they don't want to establish the principal of zero funding each year and that even \$10,000 is not zero. Chair Brown said that it was their understanding that the CIP group turns the budget over to the Planning Board, and then the Board of Selectmen passes it on to the Budget Committee. He noted that at the CIP meeting, the comment was made that if the Budget Committee recommended zero funding, a warrant article would be presented at Town Meeting and it would most likely pass. Ms. Alexander asked why not just put it on the warrant to avoid hitting the same roadblock each year. Chair Brown said that this method worked in the past but it wasn't the best arrangement. Everyone felt that \$25,000 was a good number and that \$10,000 was almost an insult.

Ms. White said that a problem the Budget Committee has had over the years is that they want to know about a specific project the Conservation Commission is working on currently, and not just put the money in the fund to save it for when they need it. Mr. Deegan said that they have a list of desirable properties and after they compile the values of those properties, they will have a better way to defend the money they are saving and asking for.

Invasive Species

Mr. Anderson said things were moving forward with Japanese Knotweed awareness. Some prisoners from Merrimack County came and hauled away some of it during a work detail. Mr. Lee is also experimenting with some various methods of ridding the Knotweed in town. He feels there is an awareness that the Town has to get involved in ridding the species, as a lot of it is growing in public rights of way. There are five or six people he knows who have dealt with the weed on their own property. They have mapped all the Knotweed in the area around Pleasant Lake. The patches are at the inlets and outlets so clearly some root stems have made their way from the outlet to the inlet area. He didn't feel it was a major problem yet but it is a good idea to keep moving forward with doing away with it.

Mr. Anderson said that he spoke with a number of landscaping firms and asked if they were interested in becoming certified to spray for Knotweed. One firm was quite interested and pursued the certification process in Concord. They found it difficult to get a supervising certification as there were many hoops to jump through. Without this certification, they wouldn't be able to allow their workers to spray. Mr. Anderson wasn't sure if there were fewer hoops for municipalities to jump through to gain certification of this level.

Mr. Anderson said that Terri Bingham (Messer Pond Protective Association) is bringing Knotweed awareness to her organization. June Fichter (Lake Sunapee Protection Association) is also getting involved and has met with other regional lake associations to discuss invasive species, including Milfoil and Knotweed. They all know that Knotweed is a problem and he feels interest and momentum will grow statewide and nationally.

Mr. Anderson shared that Knotweed had been pushed down into the creeks and streams in Vermont after Tropical Storm Irene came through and it is growing all over the Green Mountain Region. They are trying to pull it out and get rid of it but he wasn't sure how successful that effort would be.

Clark Pond Trail Species Identification

Mr. Allen passed around the second iteration of the list of 55 species of trees, plants and shrubs that are on the Clark Pond Trail. They are still in the process of being identified. Chair Brown asked if this level of species diversity was common. Ms. Alexander said that it was, and Mr. Allen said that there are even more species and plants that are not being labeled.

Mr. Allen said that his garden is looking nice and green currently because of the Club Moss. He suggested people come take a look.

Ms. White said, with regards to the signs they will use to mark the identified trees, plants and shrubs, they need to decide how to go about it. Would they label each one even if they repeat? Mr. Allen said his intent was to label two or three of each species including a sapling and an adult version, if possible. He has not yet ordered the signs.

Mike Gelcius – President of Elkins Fish & Game

Chair Brown said that Mr. Gelcius told him the duck blind refurbishing is now on track and they are ready to install everything. It should be done by the end of the month.

Ms. White said she wondered if the bridge Mr. Cook had mentioned as being an eye-sore, was part of the cross-country skiing program. Chair Brown asked her to take a photo of it as he wasn't familiar with what he was talking about.

Proposed Hospital/PSNH Trail

Chair Brown said that they have been trying to get PSNH to approve this trail that runs under their power lines. PSNH asked the Conservation Commission to mark what they wanted to do and they would go check it and see if they were OK with it. The access off of Parkside near Ms. Fraley's property is an issue. That is a 60' right of way there and it is clear that people walk through her driveway. If some brush is cut and a short bridge built could help people to get through without impacting the abutting properties. They have also thought about planting some shrubs that will protect the Fraley property by defining the trail. There is also a side access to a hospital parking lot they can use. An access on the Hodan property was also available should the owners be amenable to it. With some work, another access point could be used that would not impact any private property. The Department of Public Works may need to be involved. Ms. Clough wondered if the Outing Club would be interested in helping as the trail would go near their property. Chair Brown said he didn't know.

Mr. Denning is supposed to get in touch with PSNH for them to see what they have marked. Chair Brown confirmed that they are not going to be interfering with the sewer line and that this trail would be entirely on the hospital's property. Anything they would plant at the Fraley property would be available at the town's nursery.

Trail Adopter List

Mr. Deegan has updated this and they have just about everyone's email address now. They are still looking for an adopter for the Philips property.

Trial Maps

Chair Brown said they need to take an inventory as there is some confusion as to what they have in stock. They would go into the closet and look at what is available after the meeting. Ms. White said that keeping a stock of maps at Low Plain is also a problem. Mr. Anderson said he refills the Bog maps regularly.

Mr. Deegan suggested looking into getting the square bar codes created and placed at the trails so that people with smart phones could access the trail website, thus not needing a paper map.

Chair Brown said they need to talk about updating the main trail map. Mr. Dancy was in favor of doing the update and keeping it on the same type of paper even though it is expensive. Mr. Anderson thought the smart phone idea would be good for all the trails. Mr. Deegan said there are individual maps for each trail on the website, which could be accessed in this way. Mr. Anderson said that he wanted to meet with Bob Crane about updating some of the maps online with clearer versions.

Mr. Dancy said the High Trail and the Clark Pond Trail are missing from the main trail map. Those are both important trails and should be shown on their map.

Chair Brown said the Crockett Bridge is now complete. Mark Vernon has finished it and he may be talking to Mr. Allen about some cabling.

Mowing

Chair Brown said he emailed Peter Stanley about the three areas where he had previously mowed for the Town. The areas he mowed were Low Plain, Clark Pond area, and the Clark Lookout. Mr. Stanley suggested asking Mr. Lee in the Public Works Department for help in this area. Ms. White noted that Mr. Stanley had started mowing because Public Works would usually go in too late.

Merrimack County Work Day

The next work day is November 2nd. They usually meet at the Park ‘n Ride and then follow Chair Brown to the work site. Chair Brown was not sure he would be present that day but told Mr. Allen that he could lead the group. Mr. Allen hoped to work at Clark Pond with the workers. They should bring their lunch and water as they will be too far from the truck to come back.

Programs

October 21st – Ausbon Sargent Annual Meeting

November 1st at 6pm at the Middle School – Invasive Species Program by Ausbon Sargent

Chair Brown said that at the Board of Selectmen’s meeting, he met Leigh Bosse (owner of the Hillsboro Messenger). He said he was very interested in getting articles from the Conservation Commission and likes photos. Ms. White said she has lots of photos that could be submitted. Chair Brown suggested contacting Mr. Bosse directly by emailing him.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held November 28th. He reserved the conference room for every third Wednesday at 9am for the following year except for Thanksgiving, which will be the fourth Wednesday.

**IT WAS MOVED (Andy Deegan) AND SECONDED (Ruth White) to adjourn the meeting.
THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 11:10am.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristy Heath, Recording Secretary
Town of New London