



TOWN OF NEW LONDON, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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APPROVED Minutes of the September 15, 2010 Conservation Commission Meeting

MEMBERS PRESENT: Bob Brown (Chairman), Dan Allen, Terry Dancy, Andy Deegan, Vicki Koron, Peter Stanley (Zoning Board Administrator)

MEMBERSABSENT: Laura Alexander, Bob Crane, Emma Crane, Ruth White, Sue Clough

ALSO PRESENT: Chris Wells, as Protection of New Hampshire Forests

Chair Brown called the meeting to order at 9:30am. He said the budget for the next 18 months was due the following day. He also indicated that Mr. Chris Wells from the Society of the Protection of New Hampshire Forests was there to share some information.

Mr. Wells thanked them for agreeing to meet with him. He noted that about three weeks ago they signed a purchase and sales agreement for a piece of land measuring over 1,000 acres on Mt. Kearsarge. The property is primarily in Sutton, with a small amount in Warner, but is visible from any many viewpoints including New London. He added that over a mile of the Lincoln trail, which is part of the Greenway, would be included in this property, so it would be a big trails project as well. Some of the property is directly behind the Kearsarge Regional High School, which would be a benefit to the students who attend school there, who are from New London.

Mr. Wells indicated that they have been tracking this piece of property for a long time. It was first put on the market five years ago for \$5 million dollars, but it didn't move. Circumstances changed and they have agreed to sell it for just shy of one million dollars. The total price, including land and costs is about \$1.2 million dollars. They need to raise this amount by the end of this calendar year and are required to close just before Christmas. So far, they have raised half of the needed amount, and NOA has contributed \$300,000. Additionally there is an anonymous donor who has agreed to pledge \$250,000 towards the purchase. The town of Sutton is very close to extending \$50,000 from their fund into the project, and a Cardigan Grant is pending, which he thinks will happen. They have about \$500,000 – \$550,000 left to raise. Mr. Wells added that there is a \$150,000 grant request pending with LCHIP. He noted that the politics of LCHIP have been terrible so until it is actually awarded, they are being conservative.

Mr. Wells said that a lot of funding will have to come from local folks, including those from New London. He was planning to co-sponsor a public informational session with the Sutton Conservation Commission. He asked the New London Conservation Commission if they would be open to co-sponsoring such an informational session in New London. He thought these sessions would help them to get the word out about the project.

Mr. Allen said the students from Kearsarge High School built the Lincoln Trail and that when the faculty member in charge of the trail died, it had not been maintained. He and his wife maintained it for some time but could not continue. Mr. Allen recalled that the trail had been logged.

Mr. Wells said that the current owners of the property live in Florida and want to convert the land into cash. They felt they had agreed on a fair price of the appraised value and they want to move forward. Mr. Stanley asked what the appraised value was. Mr. Wells said that \$950,000 is the purchase price, which is

just a small premium above what the windshield appraised value was. He added that to get a deal they had to have no contingencies, and must close by December 21st or they will lose it. Mr. Stanley said that there was a statute, if adopted by a town, that allows the town to give money towards the purchase of land in other towns, but New London has not adopted it. They are not at this point able to give any funds towards a project such as this. Mr. Stanley explained that they would need to get approval at Town Meeting to appropriate money to support this. Mr. Wells said that he was not there to ask for Town funding; his organization was looking for help getting the word out and to put the New London Conservation Commission's stamp of approval on the project in hopes of attracting private donors.

Chair Brown calculated the price of the parcel to be less than \$1,000/acre. Mr. Wells agreed. He added that the property had been logged pretty hard but that the roadwork was OK. It could be a lot worse than it is. In terms of value, most of the merchantable timber is already off the property and that very little will happen on the land as far as forest management goes, for decades.

Chair Brown asked if the Forest Society would take ownership of the property. Mr. Wells answered in the affirmative and said that their goal is that it will be a Forest Society preservation area. Mr. Stanley opined that things that have been given to the State have not worked out well and personally, he would not support a project where the State would end up taking ownership of it. He thought they should make it known that the Forest Society would take ownership, because people know what DRED has done to New Hampshire's beautiful resources.

Mr. Allen asked if they would give a conservation easement. Mr. Wells said that they would have to do a third party easement, probably through Fish and Game. The NOA money has strings attached to it that would require this sort of easement. Because of the wildlife properties on the property, they are hoping the Fish and Game will send some money their way in support of this project. NOA money is attached to in-stream habitat for fish. Fish and Game like to see the outright protection of these pristine waters and small brooks, as it contributes to water quality downstream.

Chair Brown asked what kinds of restrictions would be placed on such an easement. Mr. Wells said that nothing would change as far as current use with the exception that there would be some posting against ATV use on the property, which is currently allowed. He added that there is a snowmobile trail that is maintained by the towns of Sutton and Warner, which will remain open. The property will be open for hunting and fishing, and the Lincoln trail will continue to be as such.

Mr. Wells said that there is a main access to the property on Maston Road that runs behind the high school. This is not a particularly well-known access and he is hopeful that they won't ruffle too many feathers when they restrict ATV use in that area. Mr. Allen said that there has been an issue regarding parking at that entrance. Those who live at the end of Maston Road don't like people parking there. If they gate it they will need to provide a place for people to park. Mr. Wells said their inclination now is that they are not looking to create a parking area on that road, to move the trail head, or bring in any sort of kiosk. It is an "under-the-radar" access point currently. He noted that there is existing parking on Kearsarge Valley Road, which will remain the status quo for now. His understanding is that is land where people have been parking at the end of Maston Road is owned by the Country Club of New Hampshire.

Chair Brown asked what the contingency plan was the event they don't raise enough funds to purchase the property. Mr. Wells said that it depended on how close they were. It is a 1.2 million dollar project. If they strike out and still have \$300,000 to \$500,000 left to raise they may walk away from the project. He was hopeful that happening was a fairly low probability. If the LCHIP grant goes through and they can get private funding, it should be do-able. He really felt they should be able to pull it off.

Chair Brown asked about the informational meeting that Mr. Wells was proposing. He wondered what the timeframe was that he was proposing. Mr. Wells said that they'd like it to happen sometime in October. They have a December 20th finish line so they are scrambling to get these things done. Mr. Wells added that they will be running three field trips through some of the property, beginning October 2nd. He encouraged any and all of those on the Conservation Commission to come that day to help get the word out. They really want people to know about this project by early November, so an October informational session would be ideal.

Mr. Stanley wondered if Ausbon-Sargent had any projects going on that would keep them from being to donate to this project. Mr. Deegan said that the Forest Society has been very forthcoming with the project. His biggest concern was membership for Ausbon-Sargent. They don't have anything major they are raising funds for in New London. There is a project they are currently raising funds for in Bradford, NH.

Chair Brown suggested that they should decide among themselves what to do. Mr. Dancy said at this point in time, obviously the town budget situation is extremely restricted. The idea of whether they are looking for private money or town money, in people's mind, it is still money. Mr. Stanley said the other side is that if they have a project, the town has never gone to the Forest Society for help. The Forest Society often goes out to other people for help but doesn't lend its support to smaller organizations struggling with the same issues. Will they be able to call on the Forest Society to give their help on their projects? Mr. Deegan explained that the Forest Society has, in fact, helped them out in the past. With regards to the Gross property, he felt that it would not have happened without an executor interest that wasn't the town. The Forest Society was the backup and the project closed. Mr. Wells said they are quietly collaborating together all the time through Ausbon Sargent or other land trusts. He asked if there was an example of when they were asked and didn't help. Mr. Stanley said that he couldn't recall such a time, but admitted that having their endorsement on a project that is significant would be something that would help the Town tremendously, if it were a two-way street. He wondered if this was something that they would be able to reciprocate on in the future. Mr. Wells said they would. If they were approached, in order to put in positive support, they would look to see how the project fits in to the conservation qualities from their perspective.

Mr. Deegan asked if they would have to put advertisements in the paper or just be present at the meeting. Mr. Wells said that they would deal with the advertising and that they would just need to show up. The Forest Society wants to know if the New London Conservation Commission would co-sponsor the informational session so that the ad says that they were on board with it. He was not coming to them to find a way to get Town money, and he did not want to put the Conservation Commission in position to be asking anyone in the town for money. In the end, it is their project and they will be responsible for raising funds for it.

The Conservation Commission thanked Mr. Wells for coming and giving his presentation.

Mr. Allen asked if the other people on the commission wanted to go on record to support this project. Chair Brown thought they should table the discussion until they are done going through the budget. His sense was that everyone thought it was worthwhile but they want to make sure there is no unforeseen consequence to doing it.

Minutes from the August 18, 2010.

Chair Brown said that he had heard from Laura, who chaired the meeting, that the minutes were fine. Due to the fact that no one else had seen a copy of the minutes, they decided to wait on approving them for another month. It was agreed that Recording Secretary, Kristy Heath, would forward a copy of the minutes to the Conservation Commission.

Budget

Chair Brown indicated that their 18-month budget was due the following day. To date, they have spent about 1/3 of their budget so far this year. Big ticket items they have allotted money for were the Stewardship for Easements (\$5,000) and the Forestry Management Plan (\$3,000) which equals \$8,000 of the budget that hasn't been committed. Mr. Deegan said if they close on the Messer Pond property, Ausbon Sargent will make a request for the stewardship. The easement has been approved by the town and their attorney. He is working on the baseline and is having difficulty finding some posts. Once the report is done, the Conservation Commission will review it, and then they will sign and record it. Fish and Game will be giving \$5,000 and they are attempting to raise another \$5,000. His guess would be that it would not be committed this year. Mr. Deegan thought they could encumber the funds so it is committed and not lost. They would need that money for the easement for the balance of the property at Low Plain. Mr. Deegan thought it would happen this year. In the past, they used to ask the landowner for a certain amount. It used to be \$2,500 and now is \$5,000. It is a stewardship request and is not something the landowners have to do. They do take it into account if the landowners say no when they vote on a property. Mr. Stanley said that it is considered the endowment fund for maintenance of the property. He didn't have a problem but the numbers have exploded in recent years but are now where they need to be. Mr. Deegan said that they are now an accredited organization and their asked to get \$5,000 from landowners. They just need an invoice in hand by the end of year; it does not have to be physically paid by year end.

Mr. Deegan said if they get a contract with a forester, the money would then be considered committed. The forestry management for the Phillips property was done by Clayton Platt, who was working for Pierre Bedard at the time. Leo Maslin was in charge of timber management. Mr. Stanley thought Mr. Maslin would be interested and indicated that in the past, he gave a quote for \$2,500 which they thought was reasonable. He noted that they should get a second quote to see where they were at. Mr. Stanley opined that he was always more comfortable working with people he has worked with before. Chair Brown wondered if forest plans could be interpreted differently so it wouldn't be the same quality of work if the cost was less. Mr. Stanley agreed that this was true. He noted that he has contracted with Clayton Platt for a family project but it was because he also did the survey. This property would be 200 acres with no forest management plan on any of it, only a survey. It would be a lot of work. Mr. Deegan said that the plan doesn't say they HAVE to do this, but they are asking. Mr. Stanley said it should not be done through him but initiated by the chair of the Conservation Commission. Mr. Stanley said he would give Chair Brown the appropriate contact information.

Mr. Stanley shared that Leo Maslin was the forester who marked and supervised the cut. Clayton Platt did the forestry plan. There was minimal impact on the property, and improvement on wildlife habitat. Both men did a great job. He thought they would probably get similar quotes that won't be that far off. Ms. Koron felt they should get another estimate, as they have been criticized in the past for not doing so.

Forestry plan for 2011

Mr. Deegan wondered what properties they should create management plans on. Mr. Stanley offered the dump closing properties, across the street from Mountain Road landfill, and perhaps the properties that comprise the area around the sewer lagoons, which is forested property. He added that they should consider what to do with Colby Sanctuary, which consists of 25 acres in the middle of nowhere. In the 70's they paid \$18,000 for that property.

Mr. Deegan said when talking to the forester about low plain they should let him know that they are thinking of doing the same thing on multiple properties and would they be willing to give a discount for this work. Mr. Stanley suggested asking them if they wanted to become the "town forester." Chair Brown asked Mr. Deegan if he'd take that conversation up with the forester. Mr. Deegan agreed to do so. It was

decided to put \$2,000 in for 2011 for Forestry Plans, and then for the first six months of 2012, they should add a line item for “Forest Management” and budget \$1,000.

Mr. Deegan asked what happened to the funds when Philips property was harvested. Mr. Stanley said that it went into the general fund.

It was decided to put \$5,000 in for stewardship, \$2,000 in for forestry planning/stewardship, and for the first part of 2012, put in \$2,500 for stewardship for easements.

Conservation seed mix – low plain The commission agreed to eliminate this from their budget.

Dues, NH Association Of Conservation Commissions - This amounts to \$250 per year, payable at the first of the year, so it was budgeted for both 2011 and the first six months of 2012.

Roundup – They did not use this last year. Mr. Stanley said that that the town won’t own this and they would need to hire someone to come in to do it. The commission agreed to eliminate this from their budget.

Ausbon Sargent - \$500. Chair Brown said that it looked like they paid just \$60 in 2010 for membership. It was suggested to keep this amount at \$500. Mr. Deegan recused himself, as he works for Ausbon Sargent.

Lumber for trails and blinds - trails/hardware. Mr. Stanley said the fund should be re-named “Trail Supplies.” Mr. Allen said he has spent \$700 so far and would like to spend another \$600. Chair Brown said that was fine, as they had money left to spend. He wondered if they should budget the same amount for 2011. Mr. Deegan opined that they have been having trouble spending \$4,500 this year and have managed to do a lot of work. Mr. Dancy suggested lowering it to \$3,000. Mr. Stanley said they should look at what they need to accomplish before picking a number. Chair Brown asked if \$3,500 for next year sounded right. The commission agreed. It was decided to budget \$3,500 for 2011 and \$1,750 for the first six months of 2012.

Water analysis for the bog – Ms. Koron said they have not had any storm events to be able to test the bog. The commission decided to leave \$200 in the budget for 2011 and \$100 for the first six months of 2012.

Yahoo Small Business – The cost has been \$12.95/month for the Conservation Commission’s website. They agreed to budget \$180 for 2011, and \$90 for the first six months of 2012.

Kearsarge Shopper Ads – It was agreed to budget \$200 for 2011 and \$100 for the first six months of 2012.

Printing – Chair Brown said that \$200 was spent so far. There was some discussion on whether they should update the map for the Webb Forest Trail. Mr. Dancy felt it needed updating, but said that they still have several hundred remaining. It was agreed to budget \$200 for 2011 and \$100 for the first six months of 2012.

Photos and laminating - The commission decided to keep this fund as is and budget for \$100 for 2011 and \$50 for the first six months of 2012.

Mr. Stanley said they should decide where they want to put an easement next and whether or not they need a survey. The Philips preserve has already had a survey and if they want to do that one for next year they could. Mr. Deegan said that they originally thought they’d do two easements per year but he thought they could drop it down to one per year. He agreed that the Phillips property would be a good pick for an

easement next year. They would keep the stewardship easement fund at \$5,000. Legal and miscellaneous expenses may add more. Mr. Deegan said that Ausbon Sargent takes care of the recording fees, and he didn't think legal would be that much because it is basically the same easement as Clark Pond. Mr. Stanley felt they should add \$500 for legal, so it would be \$5,500 for easement stewardship and legal review. They should budget \$2,500 for 2012.

Chair Brown said that at this point in the discussion, the budget was coming in at \$12,630 as opposed to \$14,806 that was budgeted last year.

Mr. Deegan asked about the tree farm and wondered if there was any cost associated with it. Chair Brown said if they decide to get more trees, they have the pots and ground cover already. New trees are \$1 each, which he felt was nominal and they could afford.

Mr. Stanley said something they could do is to encourage wildling harvest. In early spring seeds from self-seeded trees exist everywhere, especially in sandy edges of the road and they will start growing. As long there is no exposure of the roots to the air for more than 30 seconds, they can be transplanted to a pot. He suggested doing this and see what survives.

Mr. Stanley suggested adding a line item called "Town Forest Nursery" and budget for \$100. This will help them to establish that fact that the nursery is there. They will budget \$50 for the first six months of 2012.

Chair Brown said that there had been some discussion of hiring a college student to work as an intern for trail work in 2011. He opined that it could be a student from anywhere, not just Colby-Sawyer College. They have to work a minimum of 240 hours. Chair Brown said that he talked to Carolyn Fraley, Finance Officer, about the loaded hourly rate. At \$12/hour it would equal \$3,100 for the summer. At \$15/hour it would be \$3,900. Mr. Stanley suggested \$10/hour. The intern would work for six weeks in the summer. Chair Brown wondered if they could attract someone for \$10/hour. Mr. Stanley said that minimum wage was not up to \$10/hour yet, and if they used that figure, they would need to add \$2,600 to the budget.

Chair Brown wondered if it made sense to spend \$2,600 on having an intern. Mr. Dancy said that they have been neglecting their trails so it really is needed. Mr. Stanley said that there is so much that could be done that is more than just trail maintenance. If they added \$2,600 to their budget, it becomes \$15,280, which is a little more than a 2% increase. Mr. Stanley suggested cutting some funds from the Forest Plan Management fund. Next year it should be \$1,000 towards harvesting and \$500 for the first six months of 2012.

These changes brought the Conservation Commission's budget to \$14,280, which was still below the \$14,806 that was budgeted last year.

The commission agreed to put \$1,300 in the budget for 2011 and \$1,300 for the first six months of 2012.

It was asked who would supervise the intern. Chair Brown felt that they, as a group, need to come up with some tasks and prioritize them. Mr. Stanley said he is assigned as staff assistant to the Conservation Commission, so pursuant to that, he could assist with the supervision of the intern to some degree. He can't be out in the field all the time, but the intern could stop in for ten minutes each morning to review assignments for the day, as long as there is a plan to follow. The members of the commission could then make periodic visits in the field to see how the intern is doing. Chair Brown said they need to show the intern how things need to be done. Mr. Stanley said he would donate time to this when his schedule permits.

Chair Brown said he would talk to Ms. Levine about this. Ms. Koron asked if it would be a New London student. Mr. Stanley said it could be, but could also be a student from the regional school district. He felt they should accept resumes. Mr. Allen said they will need tools and wondered if they would be permitted to use power tools. He didn't feel comfortable sending someone out to the trails with a chain saw. It was decided that one of them from the commission could go out and cut and the intern could pull brush and clip.

CIP

Chair Brown said he sent a memo to Ms. Alexander about his meeting with the CIP subcommittee. His proposal of asking for \$25,000 was met with luke-warm feelings. They felt that the Conservation Commission had enough money saved already. He talked about the "what-if" with them, and told them where they were with respect to upcoming projects. He told them that a presentation had been made to the Board of Selectmen about one of the larger projects in their sites. Mr. Deegan said they should have a warrant article to have money available for other things, not just in fee. They should change the title to "Land Purchase and Easements." He said that nothing else was coming up that he knew of, but thought it would be good to have that money available if need-be. Chair Brown asked if the purchasing of an easement would still require a vote by taxpayers. The answer was "Yes." He asked if Mr. Deegan could put together some language they could propose for the warrant article. Mr. Deegan agreed. Mr. Stanley said that maybe this year if they don't go for the contribution to cap their reserve, they could take care of some house-cleaning. They could rename the capital reserve fund, adopt the provision in the RSA's to contribute to projects that aren't within the borders of New London, but from which New London may benefit. Mr. Stanley said that the RSA states that the town can contribute money without having an interest. Mr. Stanley and Mr. Deegan agreed to come up with a wish list of these types of things.

Land Acquisition

Mr. Stanley said he spoke with Bart Mayer (Town Counsel) on how they could accomplish accepting the Crowell gift, the right of way they own, and the triangle of land that is there. He said that it would be done through a quick claim deed. Some legal fees, amounting to about \$300 would be associated with that. Mr. Deegan said that they are hoping to accomplish this acquisition this year. They will need to contract someone to do an appraisal of that property in order to accept the gift. He has talked to Mr. Crowell and thinks there is no change in the status of the project. Mr. Deegan said he would be inclined to go ahead and have a deed drawn up. He said he has a person who would appraise the property as if it is a parcel of land owned by them. Chair Brown wondered if it would be important to get something in writing from Mr. Crowell stating his intentions. Mr. Deegan didn't think that was necessary.

Mr. Deegan said his issue with the property is that if Mr. Crowell doesn't own it, it would be the property of the town of New London, or a third party could come in to say they own it. Mr. Stanley said that there was an oversight by whoever wrote the deed, but the triangle of land was definitely part of the main parcel. He said that if they vote they want to move forward and accept the gift, they will then have to have a public hearing that is noticed correctly before they can accept the gift.

IT WAS MOVED (Dan Allen) AND SECONDED (Terry Dancy) to move forward with accepting the land gift from the Crowell's. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

Trail Projects

Mr. Allen said that he has made it half way down the Norman Trail with the blasting. More work would follow the blasting. He also noted that he has tried three different types of salt on the knot weed and it didn't look like it was doing anything. He was convinced that cutting the knot weed repeatedly was going to be the way to control it where it is next to the water.

Chair Brown noted that he and his son took three bridge platforms on the Webb property to within 800 – 1000 feet of where they need to go. They drove up near Howard Hoke's property so as not to have to carry the platforms the entire way. Chair Brown said that a small group from the diversion program would be coming in on Saturday. They would either to go finish moving the platforms on the Webb trail or finish work on the Bog. He said there were about six more sections at the Bog ready to be carried in.

Mr. Dancy said that he walked the whole loop of the Clark Pond trail. He was staggered at the amount of blasting that had been done by Mr. Allen. He added that the temporary sign for no overnight boating had fallen. Mr. Allen said that they now have a new wooden sign.

Chair Brown announced that if anyone has photos of trail work or Conservation Commission-related things, he would like some of them for the annual report. He would check with Bob Crane when he returns, to see if he has anything suitable.

Chair Brown noted that the Forest Nursery will need to be planted this fall and that he would do it. He said that he would talk with Richard Lee (Public Works Director) about further details having to do with the nursery.

Mr. Deegan offered a copy of the Van Webb forest management plan and noted that they are planning to do some more cutting soon. It was available if anyone wanted to see it.

Returning to the topic of the informational session requested by Mr. Wells from the Forest Society earlier in the meeting, Mr. Deegan noted that the Forest Society will do the fundraising themselves. Chair Brown asked if they could be specific about what the ad in the Shopper would say. Mr. Stanley said that the land Mr. Wells is talking about is the view that they look at in New London. From that perspective, it is in New London's best interest to protect it. If they use that idea, he felt it was safe to say that they endorse the proposal. Mr. Deegan added that Mr. Wells would most certainly let them look at the wording before they submit it to be printed.

IT WAS MOVED (Terry Dancy) AND SECONDED (Dan Allen) to co-sponsor an informational meeting with the New Hampshire Forest Society due to the fact that the topic of discussion has to do with the protection of a major view of Mount Kearsarge from New London. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

Chair Brown would send Mr. Wells and email letting him know they were in favor of the project and that he would like to see the notice before it is sent in to the Kearsarge Shopper.

With no other business, Chair Brown asked for a motion to adjourn.

IT WAS MOVED (Dan Allen) AND SECONDED (Vicki Koron) to adjourn the Conservation Commission meeting of September 15, 2010. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

The meeting adjourned at 11:35am.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kristy Heath, Recording Secretary
Town of New London