



TOWN OF NEW LONDON, NEW HAMPSHIRE

375 MAIN STREET • NEW LONDON, NH 03257 • WWW.NL-NH.COM

Minutes of the July 15, 2015 Conservation Commission Meeting

MEMBERS PRESENT: Bob Brown (Chairman), Laura Alexander (Vice-Chair), Mike Gelcius, Mark Vernon, Dan Allan, Terry Dancy, Jane McMurrich, Ruth White

MEMBERS ABSENT: Andy Deegan

OTHERS: Lucy St. John (Planning & Zoning Administrator), Owen Krol (Trail and Mapping Intern), Bill Helm (Planning Board Chair)

Chair Brown opened the meeting at 8:30am and gave the floor to Ruth White to present hiking patches to individuals who have hiked all the Town's trails. Hikers were: Olivia ____ (8 years old), Sheila ____ and dog, Griffin, and Don and Margaret _____. The patches were presented and a photo was taken for submission to the Intertown Record. ____ commented that the patch program is wonderful and she thought it was a great way to get people to go on different trails. The participants gave permission for the photo to be posted on the Town's website.

Minutes of June 17, 2015

IT WAS MOVED (Laura Alexander) AND SECONDED (Mark Vernon) to approve the minutes of June 17, 2015, as circulated. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

Permit Applications and Summaries – Lucy St. John, Planning & Zoning Administrator

Ms. St. John said the Planning Board recently had a tree cutting application within the streams conservation overlay district. The Planning Board's approval is contingent upon the approval of the Conservation Commission. Materials were provided to the Conservation Commission for review and it was noted the parcel was 1.13 acres in size with 150'+ of shoreline. The property owner (Banarjee) was not present at the meeting but had been notified that their case would be discussed. A tree-cutting has been approved in years past on this property. Ms. St. John noted that the points system used for the shoreland overlay district does not apply to the stream conservation overlay district. There are six trees the Banarjees wish to cut. Ms. St. John has not been to visit the site. Someone opined that it would be best if the stumps and their root systems were left after the trees were cut.

IT WAS MOVED (Laura Alexander) AND SECONDED (Mark Vernon) to approve the tree cutting plan as outlined but that the property owners leave the stumps and vegetation in their natural state after the cutting has been done. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

Ms. St. John noted that the Planning Board is discussing possible changes to the zoning ordinance. One key issue she would like to address is the tree-cutting provision. She asked the Conservation Commission if they could help with determining their role in the provisions when it comes to tree cutting. The current ordinance states that the Conservation Commission is involved; she asked the commission to think about what they want their role to be.

Chair Brown said the whole ordinance needs a major tune-up. The Conservation Commission's role has always been to offer support. He feels the Planning Board and Selectmen need to get involved with the Conservation Commission to come up with a more efficient procedure. Mr. Dancy suggested that perhaps a Conservation Commission member could go look to make sure a tree is actually dead before it is cut (if that is the reason someone wants to cut it). Chair Brown didn't feel it right to ask a volunteer to make the final decision on a property owner's application on whether they can or cannot cut.

Ms. St. John noted that the Town and the State have different point requirements for trees on the shoreland. If the Town adopted the State's provisions, their problem would be alleviated. The Town's provisions are more stringent. Bill Helm, Planning Board Chair, said there are two Planning Board members who are studying the Town's, the State's, and the surrounding town's shoreland provisions to see how New London compares. By the end of the summer, this study should be complete. Ms. Alexander said she would be interested in seeing the results of the study when it was finished. Ms. St. John said the Town needs to decide what they want the shoreland to look like; natural vs. lawn. It was noted that they were mostly concerned with the health of the lake, not so much what the shoreland looked like.

Easements and Land Acquisitions

Messer Property

Chair Brown said the Messer property was under contract in less than a week. They planned to close on it that week which was disappointing with regards to conservation. There may be some opportunity for conservation; they would wait to hear more from Mr. Deegan on the matter. The new owners know that the Town is interested in conserving the fields but more would come later on this.

Kidder-Cleveland-Clough

The property is now privately owned and is under an easement. There has been some talk about the owners gifting the land to the Town. One advantage of this would be that permission would not need to be granted to do work on the trail(s). With the beaver activity in that area, this could be helpful. The owners want to retain a piece of the land in front of the Ice House Museum and then annex it to the property owned by the Ice House Museum. The only expense incurred by doing this would be the cost of a survey which is estimated at about \$2,800. This would take Selectman and Town Meeting approval as the Town would be accepting a gift.

IT WAS MOVED (Dan Allen) AND SECONDED (Mike Gelcius) to move forward with trying to obtain the property.

Mr. Vernon asked if the Town would lose tax revenue by doing this. Chair Brown said it would, but would only be about \$1,200/year which was not substantial. He thought the new owners may put much of the land in current use.

Mr. Vernon said they will officially "own" the beaver problem if they take over the land. Chair Brown said this was considered and said an RSA states that taxpayer money cannot be used to make improvements on town-owned land. There is justification, however, as there are environmental issues and trails are often under water.

Mr. Vernon asked if they could ask the landowner to consider gifting the land across the street as well? Chair Brown felt this was a topic to talk about but would likely muddy the waters of the other gifting. Tom Coverdale, trail maintenance worker, said there has been no beaver activity on the property for the last three weeks. The idea of having the trail dry will increase the residential use of it. If it could one day connect to Colby-Sawyer and then at Spring Ledge Farm, the trail would be more widely used.

THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

Chair Brown said he saw in the previous minutes that he was given authority to look at the property that partially abuts the Clark Lookout property. \$150,000 is the asking price. He was surprised that the realtor had no prior knowledge of the history of a prior lot line adjustment. It is not yet subdivided and the owner's plan is to find someone who will make an acceptable offer, get a purchase & sales agreement and then move forward with the subdivision. Ms. Alexander thought that wording could be included in the purchase & sales agreement that if the land could not be subdivided as shown in the real estate listing, they could get any deposit back. She noted that this was a possible use for the Mary Haddad funds.

Chair Brown said there had been another discussion about the Haddad funds; Town Meeting approval is necessary because the money was donated to and accepted by the Town. Expending town funds from a reserve

fund requires town meeting approval. Ms. Alexander thought a discussion should be had with the Town Administrator and/or the Selectmen to find out the feasibility of obtaining this property.

Chair Brown said there would be a great expense after obtaining this property as part of it is rather steep and would need some work to make it passable to hikers.

Clark Pond

Mr. Allen said they have three flowers in bloom that don't normally do so. He urged people to go look at them soon before they go by. Owen Krol said he would go get some photos of the flowers so they can be put up on the website. Mr. Allen said he needed to spend between \$12 and \$20 for more labels for additional signs.

Mr. Krol, Trails Intern, said the Clark Pond brochure is mostly complete. There was some talk about where brochures should be located throughout town. Mr. Krol said he is almost done updating the master map. Chair Brown confirmed that they now have brochures/maps for Webb, Low Plain, Philbrick-Cricenti and Clark Pond.

Pleasant Lake High Trail

Mr. Vernon said the Pleasant Lake High Trail had some logging done which may have moved the trail. He suggested Mr. Krol take a look to see if the master map would need adjusting.

Lyon Brook Trail

Mr. Coverdale said he cut up a tree that had fallen on the Lyon Brook Trail. There is also a large tree in danger of falling within the next year or so at the Great Brook Trail head. When it falls, it will do so directly on the gate. He is willing to cut it up but said it was private property and didn't know if he could do so. He noted the tree has three large red dots on it. Chair Brown thought perhaps a picture should be taken and sent to the Cloughs (land owners) to ask permission to cut the tree. Mr. Vernon agreed to take the picture and send it to the Cloughs.

Davis Path

Mr. Gelcius said they put the "No Biking" signs at the Davis Path trail. He wondered what he should do with the other "No Biking" signs. Chair Brown asked if he could hold on to them. Mr. Gelcius agreed to do so.

Mutt-Mitt (dog waste) Stations

Mr. Vernon said he put one at Great Brook, Lyon Brook at Parkside, and Clark Pond trail heads. He has keys that fit them and a key has been given to the Town Office.

Powerline Trail

Mr. Vernon and Chair Brown met with the hospital and have permission to move forward with their plans for the powerline trail. The next step is to come up with a conceptual plan, which he hopes Mr. Krol can help with. They will try to stay on hospital land and avoid the Hubert's lot entirely.

Bucklin Brook Area – Beaver Activity

Chair Brown said at the culvert at Route 114 it seems that there is a lot of beaver activity. About 18" of water is being held back in a low area there and he didn't think it was causing any flooding. They are blocking the water flow under the State highway. The DOT supervisor near this area has been cleaning out the culvert area almost daily, which is not a good long-term solution. At the moment, the lake water is not being contaminated due to this beaver activity, as the testing has proven. Mr. Allen opined that the stream the beavers are damming is small and is likely to dry up. This may drive the beavers away.

Merrimack County Department of Corrections

Chair Brown said they unfortunately lost five workdays they were counting on. He had thought that the program was discontinued due to finances. Later he found that the State does not have the manpower to oversee the workers on these work days. Should their staffing increase, the program may be reinstated.

Trail Adopter Reports

Chair Brown didn't feel that the present method is working and they haven't been consistent sending out inquiries for proper information. Only three or four people are sending the reports in. He suggested perhaps if a couple people who are really involved in trail work could go down the list and make sure the trails are covered, it would help. Better overall communications is needed.

Volunteer List

Chair Brown said there are a few people on the list who have never shown up for a work detail. It is not a long list but should be reviewed.

Programs

Chair Brown said the Conservation Commission has had limited activity lately. He did notice there were a lot of other groups doing activities in the area. He wondered if there would be any benefit or way for them to work in concert with these groups. He did not want to duplicate efforts. Ms. McMurrich thought part of the trail patch program they could lead a monthly hike on one of the trails. Mr. Cordell thought maybe a color photo of a bloom on a trail could be published in the Shopper to draw interest to the trail(s). Chair Brown said this was a good idea but due to cost, the Argus-Champion, The Messenger or the Intertown would be good places to put photos/articles.

Mr. Vernon said he feels it an obligation to step up and do something with invasive species; a talk or workshop of some sort. Ms. McMurrich thought a speaker could be found to help with this. Ms. Alexander said she did an invasive species survey at the college a few years ago and there is information on the college's and the Town's website. Doug Cygan, Invasive Species Coordinator with the NH Dept. of Agriculture, Markets and Food, is the person who they would want to get to speak. She said Giant Hogweed is one newer invasive species that they are on the lookout for although they haven't seen it in the area.

The next meeting was scheduled for August 19, 2015 at 8:30am.

The meeting adjourned at 10:15am.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristy Heath, Recording Secretary
Town of New London