

Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes September 13, 2023

Present: Kathi Bradt, Janet Slocum, Gregg Thibodeau, Robin Ungeheuer, Scott Travers, Mark Girard, Rob Traver

Absent: Jennifer Bland

Guests: Steve and Lori Murray

Review and approve minutes of August 09, 2023

- Minutes were reviewed JS made a motion to approve RU seconded – minutes approved.

Organizational

- Rob Traver was approved by the Select Board as a new Conservation Commission (ConCom) member. The commission has 7 members and 1 alternate. 2 alternate positions remain open.
- **Funds/Budget**
 - Forest Maintenance Fund (FMF) \$3,908.01 (+\$0.32 interest)
 - Conservation Land Use Fund (CLUF) \$17,458.71 (+\$1.44 interest)
 - Banking Options – Town treasurer is outlining investment options.
 - Expense Process & Conservation Fund Info
 - FMF are intended to be spent in a given year; Any funds that remain at the end of the calendar year will be rolled into the general fund. CLUF funds carry over year-to-year
 - Forest management expenses are taken from the FMF
 - KB stated that the Town Treasurer can transfer funds from the CLUF to FMF as needed to ensure forest accounting
 - Copy of the guidebook published by the NH Association of Conservation Commissions was shared with the members.
- **Conservation Plan**
 - Hydrology Update – changes were made and reviewed. This completes this section of the plan.
 - Master Plan & Forest (KB)
 - JS provided a map for the wetlands that includes the 50' water buffer zone. Discussed the ability to list the wetland areas and the acreage for each. **Action Item:** JS to investigate the ability to make a list of this mapped data to include the acreage.
 - Natural Resource Areas
 - Action Item: JS to draft some groupings of some of the areas based on what is likely the way we would approach efforts in those grouped areas for our next meeting.
 - Priority Topics
 - GT reviewed the following draft topics
 - Improve Water Quality in major waterbodies (lakes, ponds > 10 acres, 3rd and 4th order rivers and streams)
 - Improve Forest and Wildlife Habitats of our town owned properties
 - Increase Wildlife Habitats – increase amount of conserved lands & begin creating wildlife corridors.
 - Protect Wetlands - Assess the state of our major wetlands (> 10 acres) and determine best management practices (BMP); add identified BMPs to Conservation Plan (CP).
 - Address Climate Change - Assess town/county climate change ecological impacts and determine applicable BMPs; add BMPs to CP.
 - Engage the Community via education, training and volunteer events. This could be a separate effort or part of any of the identified topics above.
 - The commission ranked the above topics in the following order:
 1. Engage the Community (5 votes)
 2. Wetlands (2 votes)
 3. Climate Change (2 votes)
 4. Water Quality (2 votes)
 5. Forest and Wildlife Habitats

- It was also stated that there would always be some concurrent activities such as forest management of the town forests. Additionally, there is an effort being led by the Crescent Lake Association (CLA) that has been started to assess and address water quality in Crescent Lake which will contribute to ConCom goals.
 - **Action Item:** GT to update the conservation plan with these priorities and begin to list activities that are in progress within each of these priorities.
 - Once we have developed the priority areas we will leverage these topics to define specific actions.
- Rare, Endangered and Invasive Species (RT) – First Review
 - RT reviewed his to date report and findings. Feedback was provided and RT will continue to build out this section of our conservation plan.
 - Geology
 - We reviewed a draft of the description of our geology that RU developed. Suggestion was made to use what RU has developed and any of the still valid previously defined master plan geology. Goal would be to ensure that we have a description that aids landowners in the management of their properties. This applies more specifically to soils which RU will address next.
 - **Action Item:** RU to work on the soils portion for our conservation plan.
- **Bylaws** – No changes

Forestry and Conservation

- **Land Protection**
 - ****NEW**** Supreme Court Ruling – protected wetlands need to be continuous to major waterbodies.
 - We reviewed the DES response to Representative Aron’s note stating that NH will continue to follow its own rules and will not be impacted by the federal ruling. Commission members were in general agreement.
 - DES Shoreland Info – GT reviewed an informational product that was leveraged in recent communications with some Shoreland Protection Zone questions and actions being taken by residents.
 - Request for Information - NH Route 123A Culvert Conveying – Concom received a request along with the town for information for culvert work that NH DOT wants to perform on 123A in Acworth. GT to respond.
 - Intents to Cut - None
 - Building, excavation, and other permits - None
 - Forestry complaints, concerns & other actions
 - Dodge Hollow Update – Plan to be reviewed with Select Board 9/18.
 - Crescent Lake – Map 201 Lot 92 – Dishong dock lift possible violation. Complaint issued, file # 2023-01750. Awaiting DES letter.
 - Forester actions and plans – expense funding research is in progress.
 - Surveyor action and plans – Eric to schedule a review with KB and GT to review some issues that were identified in the survey.
 - Tree Warden actions and plans – none
 - Easement Monitoring – 2023 assignments made, please complete monitoring prior to 1 Dec.
 - Town Owned Land Management
 - Update Prouty/Honey Brook Property - Map 250 lot 2 – Decision required. Deed drafted.
 - NH DOJ completed their review and changed the deed language, our attorney provided guidance. ConCom has to weigh in and recommend next step. Attorney identified changes:
 - “It does not include a waiver of any fees related to the Town’s reacquisition of the property. I do not know if the State levies a fee under a reverter clause, as it might under a sale of the property back to the Town.
 - “3. The revision also deletes the purpose statement from the prior version, which stated that the property was to be added to Honey Brook State Forest for conservation and recreational purposes. I know this was important to the Conservation Commission, although I’m not sure if there would be any other use for the property by the State. It is really up to the Town to decide if it wants to push back on this point.”

- “4. The revision has deleted the reference to the property not being homestead property. This is standard language but considering the identities of both the Grantor and Grantee, it is probably not important.”
- Concom agreed to push back on the state and ask if a statement on the waiver can be added and ask why the purpose statement was removed.
- **Action Item:** GT to respond to the state accordingly.
- **Water Protection** (Crescent Lake, Cold River, watersheds, wetlands, ponds, and perennial streams)
 - Shoreland Permit Issue – Haynes; permit pending - we did not get to this topic, to be discussed at our next mtg.
 - Crescent Lake Water Quality Project Update - we did not get to this topic, to be discussed at our next mtg.

Communications, Training and Outreach

- **Training-Education**
- **Community Outreach**
 - Volunteer Field Events – Crescent Lake Boundary Marking and Cleanup. Keyes Hollow Nature Trail
 - Educational topics – Climate Change Impacts; Coincide with work on the Conservation Plan
 - Commission Member Education Opportunity – Endangered and invasive species review
 - Mark Girard New England Cottontail & invasive Perennial pepperweed or *Lepidium latifolium*.
 - MG reviewed the history and plight of the NE cottontail and critical characteristics of the pepperweed.
 - All of our sessions on rare/threatened and invasive species can be found in the shared drive:
 - <https://1drv.ms/f/s!AqRxoWfEqT8Tg-1ZCfbvbXWeKynxOg?e=IPX73v>

Public

- Steve Murray - Raised a concern regarding the shoreland and building permit violations occurring on Crescent Lake. He recommended that the Select Board or ConCom put something in the next tax mailer distribution. GT mentioned that the Water Quality Group now has mailing addresses for all of the Acworth residents and intends to produce a first announcement shortly that will define that groups purpose and start to provide helpful fact sheets regarding water quality and DES requirements.
- **Next Meeting** – 11 October 2023 at 7pm in the Town Hall.

Motion made to close the meeting at 8:40pm. Motion passed.

Conservation Commission Members:

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