

Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes June 14, 2023

Present: Jennifer Bland, Kathi Bradt, Janet Slocum, Gregg Thibodeau, Scott Travers, Robin Ungeheuer

Absent: Mark Girard

Guests: Rob Traver

Meeting came to order 1900.

Review/approve Minutes of May 5, 2023

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

Organizational

- **New Member** -- Rob Travers expressed a desire to join the commission if a alternate position was available. GT to send RT the requirements. RT stated that he was previous experience working conservation topics within a municipality. GT stated that we would consider his membership as an alternative
- **Funds/Budget**
 - Forest Maintenance Fund \$3,907.02 (+\$0.31 interest)
 - Conservation Land Use Fund \$17,454.31 (+\$1.39 interest)
- **Conservation Plan**
 - Co-Occurrence Update (JS)
 - JS made 3 more maps. The first two JS changed the buffers on the maps showing priority wetland areas, wildlife habitat, also shows our natural resources and from this we can create a map to prioritize areas for future preservation.
 - Hydrology Update (GT)
 - GT has worked on this and added more information. GT asked JS to help with this by adding the list of areas that we want to focus on. Jennifer Griffin stated we should be organized by water sheds and water bodies; GT has organized it by water sheds with water features that are in the water shed. The Crescent Lake/Cold River watershed has 47 water features between Acworth, Marlow, Lempster, etc. GT listed out the important water features that are in Acworth for the one watershed. GT lists the monitoring agencies and who monitors them, the water shed plan, descriptions of the water sheds/bodies, where it is located with information showing the condition of the water sheds/bodies (+/-) aquatic life status and other nutrient conditions.
 - Master Plan & Forest (KB)
 - KB went over Master plan & Forest plan updates she worked on. Conservation also oversees intents to cut in previous years we had an average of 20 intent to cuts per year – there has been a decrease in intents to cut to from average approximately 20 per year to 13, KB said this could be added, KB leveraged the goals from the original master plan and that land and forest has been supported. Update the finical support for the foresting the town forest as that is not in the master plan. Let people know that our forest is protected, and just bringing it up to date letting people know what we have JS will create a list of wetland areas and circle them for future ref supporting education on preservation.
 - GT said there are other types of conservation lands. When you total the amount of land in conservation there is a sizable amount of land in Acworth in some form of conservation. Some of it is in private conservation trusts (e.g. Fenderson), some is in conservation trusts with the town and Society for the Protection of NH Forests, or LCHIP or Monadnock Conservancy, others are in state sponsored agricultural easements. It's unknown what the rules are with some of these trusts, e.g. could a landowner change an agricultural easement to develop the land once the land was no longer used for agriculture. Most easements are in perpetuity. GT suggested we have a list in our conservation plan of all the conservation lands that the town has by type including how many acres are in conservation.
 - How do we know if our Forest and Wetlands are healthy? MG was not present and should be able to help us define those measures. We will follow-up with MG when he returns in July or

August. GT attended a training on wet land assessments, GT thinks that we should add a goal to conduct a wetland assessment of the Keyes Hollow area and any other significant wetland areas in the conservation and master plan.

- Assign other sections – Natural Resources, Education-Communication-Outreach, appendix items.
 - JS agreed to start building out the Natural Resources sections.
 - RT agreed to start building out the Rare, Endangered and Invasive Species appendix section.
- **Bylaws** – Bylaws are not required. When used they should not conflict with Master Plans and Conservation Plans. They do not have to be signed off by the Select Board.

Forestry and Conservation

● **Land Protection**

- Intents to Cut
 - 1. 23-001-10-T: Black North Road, Burdick (Ashley and Jereme) map 208/lot 6; 1 acres of 11.3; 25K MBF, 60 tons of pulpwood; 15 cords of cordwood; Stephen O’Neill responsible for cut.
- Building, excavation, and other permits - None
 - Pierce Brook (formerly Ernst) Property – Request made to swap 8 acres in and out of the conservation easement; GT reviewed this and there were no issues with the swapping of the property. Forest Society who oversees the property advised that portions of the property cannot be swapped and provided court precedents indicating that swapping properties were not allowed in a court of law.
- Forestry complaints, concerns & other actions
 - Dodge Hollow Update – Plan created; diagram with measures pending. GT is going out to Dodge Brook to take measurements.
- Forester actions and plans – pending plan schedule from our forester
- Surveyor action and plans - talked with surveyor (Peabody) Discussed 5/19, expects to complete in 2 weeks. GT to follow-up.
- Tree Warden actions and plans – none
- Easement Monitoring – confirm 2023 assignments.
- Town Owned Land Management
 - Update Prouty/Honey Brook Property - Map 250 lot 2 – Deed drafted. NH DOJ has to review and then it will go to the Governor to be signed.

● **Water Protection** (Crescent Lake, Cold River, watersheds, wetlands, ponds, and perennial streams)

- Permits – None
- Fong Land Purchase Request – Map 201, Lot 107
 - Mr. Fong has approached Conservation to purchase land from the town that Mr. Fong is currently incurring on. Mr. Fong has been using this area as a parking area. GT sent a letter indicating the significant conservation value of the property. Ideally nature in that area should be allowed to return to its natural state to provide more habitat and a buffer for the significant intermittent stream that is on the town owned property. GT replied to Mr. Fong and advised him that we are not interested in selling the property and that if he disagrees, he can reach out to the Select Board. There is not a lot of undeveloped land on Crescent Lake, and this area connects to conservation land in Unity which creates a wildlife corridor. The area is important waterfowl area and gives animals, insects, reptiles and amphibians access to Crescent Lake.
- Crescent Lake Water Quality Project – Title: Protecting Crescent Lake and its Watershed; Date / Time: Saturday, July 1, 2023. Doors open at 9:45. events starts at 10am; Place: Unity Elementary School; Affiliated Partners: Sullivan County Conservation District, Crescent Lake Association - Water Quality Committee, Town of Acworth Conservation Commission, Town of Unity Conservation Commission; likely location will be the Unity Elementary School.
- Federal Supreme Court Ruling & NH Wetland Rule Changes
 - There are several changes at the State and Federal Level for changes to Wetland areas,

- There was a Supreme Court case where the contractor won the case allowing him to develop a wetland areas that are not connected significantly by a water feature to other features. This opens the door for wetlands to be developed.
- NH also has a public hearing coming up in July regarding wetland permit process.

Communications, Training and Outreach,

- **Training-Education**
 - **NH Fish & Game – Wildlife Action Plan** - <https://www.wildlife.state.nh.us/wildlife/wap.html>
 - GT asked the commission to review the NH Fish and Game, Wildlife Action Plan (WAP), if we haven't.
- **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
 - Watersheds - <https://www.usgs.gov/special-topics/water-science-school/science/watersheds-and-drainage-basins>
 - Aquifers and Groundwater - <https://www.usgs.gov/special-topics/water-science-school/science/aquifers-and-groundwater>
 - Commission Member Education Opportunity – Endangered and invasive species review
 - Mark Girard August New England Cottontail
- **Next Meeting** – 12 July 2023 at 7pm in the Town Hall.
- A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 2012 by JS and seconded by GT.

Conservation Commission Members:

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