

September 28, 2022

APPROVED

In attendance: Rob Clemens – Chair, Rich Hart, Peter Lyon – Board of Selectmen Ex-Officio,
Lee Gilman, Bill Widmer (remote), and Christian Littlefield (alternate).
Staff present: Kristan Patenaude – Recording Secretary (remote).

Chair Rob Clemens called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

ADMINISTRATIVE:

1. Chair Comments

Rob Clemens thanked the Friends of the Orchard and all of the volunteers involved for putting on the Cider Fest event. Rich Hart stated that the event went well. Rob Clemens asked for a report regarding the full event at a future meeting.

2. Minutes: August 24, 2022

Lee Gilman moved to approve the meeting minutes of August 24, 2022, as amended [Line 131: change “fake” to “artificial”; Line 520: amend to read, “Lee Gilman referenced available training...;” Line 529: change “salt” to “dissolved”.] Rich Hart seconded.

Roll Call vote: 3-0-1; motion carried [C. Littlefield abstaining].

3. Treasurer’s Report

Bill Widmer explained that the Land Account currently sits at \$974,524, with a pending deposit of \$15,090 for a total of \$989,614. There were no additional incoming items to the Gift Account, leaving it at \$27,436.

Lee Gilman moved to approve the Treasurer’s Report, as presented. Rich Hart seconded.

Roll Call vote: 4-0-0; motion carried unanimously.

4. Planning & Permitting

Rob Clemens noted that, at last week’s Planning Board meeting, the Clearview development was approved for two components, a 25-lot residential development on the west portion of the property and an 18-unit 55+ development on the east side of the property. The application was approved with a number of conditions, some of which included comments the ACC previously made regarding signage along wetland buffers. There was also discussion regarding surrounding trails on nearby easements connecting to this development.

TOPICS

5. FY23/24 Strategic Plan & Budget

Bill Widmer explained that he is hoping to have Commissioners express their potential, proposed budget items for FY23/24, so that he can start planning for the budget cycle.

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Rob Clemens noted that the ACC is scheduled to present its Strategic Plan to the Board of Selectmen on October 11, 2022. Last year, the ACC included its draft budget in this presentation, and he would like to do the same this year.

The Commission discussed the remaining FY23 budget. Bill Widmer explained that there will likely be an ongoing budget number of approximately \$1,000 in the Wages line, for the Recording Secretary. The Commission also tends to budget for some educational trainings and professional development. It was noted that there will likely be budget lines for items such as water crossings and maintenance, signage, and invasives management, similar to prior years.

Rob Clemens noted that, in the past, the ACC has distinguished in its Strategic Plan report between what are described as public facing expenditures, which are funded out of the Operating budget versus land management expenditures, which are generally funded from the Conservation Fund. He noted that the Commission may want to consider what to qualify the recent mowing and invasive work at Lindabury Orchard as.

Rob Clemens noted that the ACC will be billed for its NHACC membership at some point. This will be approximately \$650 and paid for from the Dues and Subscriptions line item. The Commission noted that it needed to discuss the Dropbox subscription and other potential items in this budget line with Jared Hardner.

Regarding the Signage line item, Christian Littlefield noted that the Commission will be receiving a bill for approximately \$750-\$800 worth of signs within the next couple weeks. He estimated that an additional approximately \$500 worth of signage could be needed before the end of this fiscal year. It was noted that some additional signage may be necessary at the Clearview development, such as for the trailhead public parking area. All of the internal trails to the property will be handled by the developer and/or the Amherst Land Trust.

Rob Clemens noted that wood was purchased for a number of projects under the Water Crossing and Maintenance line item. There is likely still enough wood for a number of projects. It was noted that the Bragdon Farm fencing will be discussed later in the meeting by Christian Littlefield as a larger budget expense.

Bill Widmer explained that there is still quite a bit of funding, \$1,250, in the Educational Outreach line. He would like to discuss what could be done with those funds in order to try to improve public outreach from the ACC. Rob Clemens explained that the invasives subcommittee identified a clear need for attention to communications regarding both invasives management and regarding specific projects of the ACC. He stated that there does not seem to be a lot of items that the ACC needs to communicate on, but there needs to be a better vehicle to communicate when needed with the public. Some of this may involve collection of information and posting/linking through various social media sources. There is also the potential to have speakers for various topics of interest to the public, and signage for abutters during certain projects. Bill Widmer suggested the creation of a Commission newsletter. Rob Clemens agreed that this could be a good idea but needs volunteer effort to work. Rich Hart noted that he is

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88 considering completing some hikes, such as a tree identification hike with Lee Gilman, with his
89 GoPro, which could then be posted to the ACC website and the Town TV channel.

90
91 Rich Hart noted that the Commission may want to consider setting aside funding for the mowing
92 of the lower Lindabury orchard. Rob Clemens explained that mowing has been funded in the past
93 out of the Conservation Fund, but more publicly facing projects could deserve funding from the
94 operating budget.

95
96 Rich Hart noted that he is hoping Lee Gilman will help to host a tree pruning workshop next year
97 at Lindabury again. Bill Widmer explained that it would likely cost approximately \$2,000 to
98 have the orchard professionally pruned. While volunteer efforts are welcome, it would likely
99 require additional work from a professional. Rob Clemens noted that this could be an item
100 addressed with Friends of the Orchard, as they just raised some funding through the Cider Fest. It
101 was noted that this pruning work should likely be carried out in late February or early March of
102 next year.

103
104 Rob Clemens explained that the Souhegan Watershed Association was applying for a grant from
105 the State to complete an updated River Corridor Management Plan for the Souhegan River. As
106 part of that grant, the Association was going to seek funds to do E. coli DNA sampling, as E.coli
107 has been found to be a problem in a couple of areas of the Souhegan River, including Beaver
108 Brook which flows through Amherst. He believes there is a hope and desire that the Commission
109 could get some additional work done within Amherst as part of that project, and that the
110 Commission would contribute some funding. He is unsure if this will happen in this fiscal year
111 or next. It is believed that the Association should hear back on this grant before the end of the
112 year.

113
114 It was noted that the Commission needs to have a larger discussion regarding budgeting for a
115 potential GIS mapping license. John Harvey was previously interested in having the license
116 capability beefed up for the Town.

117
118 Rob Clemens explained that, with regard to strategic initiatives for the next year, there have been
119 some discussions regarding water resources protection. He, John Harvey, Bill Stoughton, and
120 Jared Hardner spent time last year identifying various aspects of water in Amherst. Currently, the
121 ACC does not have a water resource component of its Conservation Plan. Surface water and
122 groundwater items are identified in the inventory maps but there has not been a focus on
123 groundwater resources. With new information regarding PFAS and potential drought issues, it
124 would be a good idea to create a focus on these items.

125
126 Rob Clemens noted that invasives management is in the ACC's Strategic Plan and more will be
127 done with this topic over the coming year. The group will also continue its land acquisition
128 initiatives, as well as items for signage and trail-related activities.

129
130 There was discussion regarding meadow mowing and maintenance. Rob Clemens noted that
131 managing meadows has typically been funded from the Conservation Fund. If extra time or

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equipment is needed for mowing outside of what DPW can provide, the Commission should be ready to contribute funding and a consultant to do the work.

Rich Hart stated that he would like to consider an educational kiosk at Lindabury Orchard regarding the history of the land, management of the apple trees, Cider Fest, etc. Christian Littlefield stated that he would help Rich Hart with consideration of this item.

Rob Clemens stated that he would ask other Commissioners if they had any additional thoughts for upcoming fiscal year budget items.

6. Project Status – Christian Littlefield

Christian Littlefield stated that he has been working with DPW and other contractors regarding mowing at various ACC parcels. Previously ordered signage will be arriving shortly and he will work with the DPW to determine proper minimum distances off the edge of roads and appropriate heights.

Christian Littlefield noted that volunteers are needed to help clear trash and large items from the Lynch Farm lot, off Spring Road, that was recently logged. The DPW will leave a truck and trailer for trash collection. It was noted that a date would be arranged in later October/early November.

Regarding the fence on the Bragdon Farm property, Christian Littlefield explained that a split rail wooden fence, 400-600 linear feet, along with a gate would likely cost somewhere between \$9,000-\$15,000. He will continue to pursue pricing for this project. It was noted that the gate will need to not impede mowing of the field. It was noted that ongoing construction in the area, including culverts, is likely not to be complete for about a year.

Christian Littlefield stated that, regarding proposed parking at Great Meadow/the Alice Towne Lot, he recently met with DPW Director Eric Slosek, who stated that, from his perspective there are not any issues with a parking area in that location. It meets all line-of-sight requirements. DPW Director Slosek felt that the ACC would not need to seek approval from other boards/commissions in Town but would need to submit an application for a driveway permit. It was noted that the deed for the Alice Towne Lot should be reviewed regarding allowing parking or construction. The Commission discussed a potential design for this parking area. This could be made to potentially fit 3-5 cars, along with a small kiosk.

Christian Littlefield stated that he would like to create a list of areas in Town that require trimming, or other maintenance. He would like there to be volunteers, similar to trail stewards, to help in this work where the need arises.

In response to a question from Rob Clemens, Bill Widmer stated that the chestnut and elm trees he previously planted are continuing to do well. Christian Littlefield noted that there may need to be some maintenance done around the fencing for some of these plantings.

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In response to a question from Rob Clemens, Bill Widmer explained that the Chestnut Foundation is likely still able to provide more trees for planting, if the ACC wishes.

7. Other Business

Rob Clemens stated that he recently met with Will Ludt, of the Heritage Commission, regarding the Parker Farm easement, the location of the Corn Crib. There is an older, dilapidated building which sits next to the Corn Crib. The Heritage Commission had interest in restoring this building but, through discussions with consultants, it was determined that the building is beyond restoring or salvaging. The Heritage Commission will be meeting in October to discuss demolishing the building. As the Conservation Commission has responsibility for the Parker easement, Will Ludt wanted the group to be aware and express any opinions or desires. Rob Clemens stated that he would prefer to defer to the Heritage Commission's judgment on the building's historical value. There are some historic elements to the building which are salvageable, and the intention is to possibly store these items in the Corn Crib. The stone foundation of the building will be left with historic signage commemorating the building. Lee Gilman noted that the area has a lot of invasives which could be potentially removed during this work.

Rob Clemens noted that the Amherst Land Trust is hosting a race in the Joe English property this weekend. Bedford is also holding a race this weekend using a portion of the Joppa Hill trails.

Rob Clemens noted that he will be meeting with Bedford's Town Planner regarding mowing of the Joppa Hill property and concerns regarding the condition of the road coming from the Educational Farm to Pulpit Brook, which crosses into Amherst. The road is eroding and is in very bad condition.

Rob Clemens stated that he took part in an initial invasives management discussion with Lee Gilman, DPW Director Eric Slosek, Jeanne Johnson from the Garden Club, and Matt Seiler, who created the original petition for a moratorium on chemical invasive management. There was a lot of good discussion and more information regarding Town ordinances and regulations is needed. It was agreed that the ACC needs to do a much better job communicating with regard to invasive species management in Town.

Rich Hart noted that he has finished cutting wood that was on his property and has donated it to the Wood Ministry. The Commission discussed if that group would be interested in processing certain trees that have fallen on ACC property.

Rich Hart noted that he recently held a picnic for the Town's trail stewards. Approximately ten people attended and also heard a presentation from Chris Buchanan, Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee.

Bill Widmer praised Deb Bender, Finance Director, and the Finance Department for their work through past ACC budget adjustments.

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Bill Widmer noted that he is examining the idea of introducing a predator beetle to combat the wooly adelgid in Town. He has spoken with the NH State Coordinator and an entomologist working on a similar project in Connecticut. There has been a positive project in Massachusetts using these beetles. He stated that he has not yet been able to identify a hot spot of wooly adelgid infestation in Town. He is working with Lee Gilman on this possibility. It would likely cost approximately \$3,500-\$3,600 for 1,500 beetles to release.

Bill Widmer suggested that the ACC could consider hosting some educational speakers for various topics at the Library. Rob Clemens agreed that this could be further explored.

Lee Gilman moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:46pm. The meeting was adjourned.

*Respectfully submitted,
Kristan Patenaude*

Minutes approved: November 9, 2022