

TOWN OF AMHERST
Conservation Commission

May 12, 2021

APPROVED

In attendance via Zoom : Rob Clemens – Chair, John Harvey [7:42pm], Frank Montesanto, Lee Gilman, Vick Bennison, Rich Hart, Bill Widmer (Alternate), and Bill Stoughton (Alternate).
Staff present: Natasha Kypfer – Town Planner, and Kristan Patenaude – Recording Secretary.

Chairman Rob Clemens called the online meeting to order at 7:01 pm, with the following statement. As Chair of the Amherst Conservation Commission, I find that due to the State of Emergency declared by the Governor as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and in accordance with the Governor’s Emergency Order #12 pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04, as extended by various Executive Orders, this public body is authorized to meet electronically.

Please note that there is no physical location to observe and listen contemporaneously to this meeting, which was authorized pursuant to the Governor’s Emergency Order.

However, in accordance with the Emergency Order, I am confirming that we are:

Providing public access to the meeting by telephone, with additional access possibilities by video or other electronic means:

We are utilizing Zoom for this electronic meeting.

All members of the Board have the ability to communicate contemporaneously during this meeting through this platform, and the public has access to contemporaneously listen and, if necessary, participate in this meeting through dialing the following phone #646-558-8656 and password 829 7200 2428, or by clicking on the following website address: <https://zoom.us/j/82972002428> that was included in the public notice of this meeting.

Providing public notice of the necessary information for accessing the meeting:

We previously gave notice to the public of the necessary information for accessing the meeting, including how to access the meeting using Zoom or telephonically. Instructions have also been provided on the website of the Conservation Commission at:

www.amherstnh.gov.

Providing a mechanism for the public to alert the public body during the meeting if there are problems with access: If anybody has a problem, please call 603-341-5290.

Adjourning the meeting if the public is unable to access the meeting:

In the event the public is unable to access the meeting, the meeting will be adjourned and rescheduled.

Please note that all votes that are taken during this meeting shall be done by roll call vote.

Let’s start the meeting by taking a roll call attendance. When each member states their presence, please also state whether there is anyone in the room with you during this meeting, which is required under the Right-to- Know law.

Vick Bennison, Frank Montesanto, Rich Hart, Bill Widmer, Bill Stoughton, Rob Clemens, and Lee Gilman – all present and alone.

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Bill Stoughton sat for John Harvey, until his later arrival.

Bill Widmer sat for Jared Hardner

ADMINISTRATIVE:

1. Chair Comments – none

2. Minutes

Vick Bennison moved to approve the meeting minutes of April 14, 2021, as amended [Line 156, change Bill Widmer to Mike Cohen]. Bill Stoughton seconded.

Roll call: Vick Bennison – aye; Rob Clemens – aye; Lee Gilman – aye; Rich Hart – aye; Bill Widmer – aye; Bill Stoughton – aye; and Frank Montesanto – abstain. 6-0-1; motion carried.

3. Treasurer's Report

Bill Widmer reviewed the Treasurer's Report. He noted that the Commission has approximately \$5,600 to spend before the end of the year. He explained that there is still a large balance waiting to be transferred into the Conservation Fund from LUCT transactions.

Frank Montesanto moved to accept the Treasurer's Report as presented. Vick Bennison seconded.

Roll call: Vick Bennison – aye; Rob Clemens – aye; Lee Gilman – aye; Rich Hart – aye; Bill Widmer – aye; Bill Stoughton – aye; and Frank Montesanto – aye. 7-0-0; motion carried unanimously.

4. Planning & Permitting

Bill Stoughton explained that the Planning Board recently heard the proposed subdivision and CUP application for a property on Boston Post Road that looked to shrink the wetland buffer in order to accommodate a very large size garage (approximately 40'x80'). The applicant came back before the Planning Board with a revised application for a much smaller garage and the Planning Board approved this request, with the condition that no commercial vehicles be stored or maintained in it. The CUP request looked to reduce the buffer on this property from 100' to 50'. The Planning Board decided to leave the buffer at 100' but allow the proposed use (for a driveway and stormwater system) be located within the buffer area. This way, if in the future an owner wants to have an unallowed use on this property, there will still be ordinance protections in place.

In response to a question from Rob Clemens, Natasha Kypfer stated that the Board of Selectmen voted on Monday to hire Resilience Planning & Design, LLC, as the outside 3rd party consultant to help the Master Plan Steering Committee with the Master Plan update. The Committee will meet at least once a month, the third Monday of the month, for about the next 12 months to work through this process.

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In response to a question from Frank Montesanto, Natasha Kypfer stated that there are approximately 10-12 people currently on the Steering Committee. There will be an opportunity for others to get involved as the Committee decides on smaller working groups.

TOPICS

5. Amherst Clean Up Day – May 15, 2021

Bill Widmer stated that bags and gloves have been distributed to Moulton's Market, the Library, and the Homestead. The uptake of the materials seems slower than last year. He recently placed materials in a large yellow tub outside Moulton's and this seemed to show increased uptake. He will do the same at the Library. The trailer for bag collection is out at Souhegan High School with the ACC logo sign attached.

6. Open Space Warrant Article update

Rob Clemens explained that a few Commission members went to Deliberative Session to support the Warrant Article. Some comments were received about the Warrant Article being for too much, or that the Ways & Means Committee felt it is a "want" not a "need." There were efforts to dial back the Warrant Article, but these failed, and it was placed on the ballot as written.

Rob Clemens noted that approximately 50 road signs have been purchased and Bill Stoughton designed an FAQ. He has addressed the Amherst Garden Club and believes other groups around Town should be reached out to as well.

Rob Clemens noted that it's been suggested that the Commission join in with the Bike/Ped Committee and the Recreation Department to jointly promote all of the associated Warrant Articles. Bill Stoughton stated that his initial reaction is that each group should stand on its own with its own Warrant Article.

7. Other Business

Vick Bennison stated that he is proposing to get rid of 67 paper signs still left on some of the kiosks and replaced them with PVC signs. He also noted that there are several varieties of hunting information signs on the kiosks. He believes these should be standardized. He stated that there are also historic marker signs for Pond Parish, signage for the Josiah Parker bypass, and a map of the whole Great Meadow area that are ready to be printed out.

Vick Bennison moved to expend an amount, not to exceed \$750, to replace paper signs with PVC signs on kiosks in Town, from the Signage account line. Bill Stoughton seconded.

Discussion:

Bill Stoughton suggested that the hunting signs be amended with language that reflects the Deer Stand Policy approved by the Commission.

The Commission agreed to hold the vote on this item to see what other budget items might be discussed.

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Frank Montesanto stated that there is a fair amount of lumber left for the Commission to use, but that additional fasteners would be useful. He would like to make a motion for this expense.

John Harvey entered the meeting and took his seat on the Board [7:42pm].

Rob Clemens noted that it has been difficult for the DPW to mow Lindabury Orchard this year and that some of the leftover funds could go toward having the Orchard mowed. Bill Widmer explained that the Meadow Maintenance line was zeroed out from the budget about two years ago because it was thought that mowing expenses would come out of LUCT funds. He is unsure if using budget funds for mowing of the Orchard is appropriate. Rob Clemens stated that he would like to distinguish between mowing an area that is usually done by the Town versus one completed by contractors.

Frank Montesanto stated that he estimates that it will cost \$1,890 for Lindabury to be mowed and weed wacked.

Bill Stoughton stated that he would support this mowing expenditure as the Orchard is used by the public and this action would be public facing. The Town has been, in general, paying for this area to be mowed by the DPW and thus it would be appropriate to use money from the budget to mow it this year.

Bill Widmer questioned if this expenditure could be paid for by Friends of the Orchard. Frank Montesanto noted that there is not budget for that this year and that these funds are generally for emergencies.

Vick Bennison moved to expend an amount not to exceed \$800 for PVC signage to replace paper signs on the kiosks, and other already planned signs, from the Signage budget line. Bill Widmer seconded.

Roll call: Vick Bennison – aye; Rob Clemens – aye; Lee Gilman – aye; Rich Hart – aye; John Harvey – aye; Frank Montesanto – aye; and Bill Widmer – aye. Motion carried unanimously.

Frank Montesanto moved to expend an amount not to exceed \$600 to replenish fasteners used for water crossings and infrastructure. Lee Gilman seconded.

Frank Montesanto amended his motion to read “...not to exceed \$700...” Lee Gilman seconded.

Roll call: Vick Bennison – aye; Rob Clemens – aye; Lee Gilman – aye; Rich Hart – aye; John Harvey – aye; Frank Montesanto – aye; and Bill Widmer – aye. Motion carried unanimously.

Rob Clemens moved to expend up to \$500 to cover interim mowings of upper Lindabury Orchard, if the DPW cannot do so, between now and the end of June. John Harvey seconded.

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Roll call: Vick Bennison – aye; Rob Clemens – aye; Lee Gilman – aye; Rich Hart – aye; John Harvey – aye; Frank Montesanto – aye; and Bill Widmer – nay. 6-1-0; motion carried.

Frank Montesanto noted that there are two bridges in Joe English that need to be removed, as well as the backstops at Buck Meadow. He will meet with VCS (Vegetation Control Services) to discuss poison ivy treatments at Lindabury Orchard. He noted that Friends of the Orchard is not sure if CiderFest will happen this year.

In response to a question from Frank Montesanto, John Harvey explained that the approved sidepath from Amherst center to Milford has been moved to the other side of the road. This change proposes to remove 75 trees along the way. The change is being done because of the number of utility poles on the original side of the road proposed. Rob Clemens stated that the Atherton Trail will not directly be able to connect to the sidepath anymore with this new layout.

John Harvey noted that all 30 slots for the bird walk at Buck Meadow on May 15, 2021, have been filled.

John Harvey explained that he posted the educational signs, put together by Mike Cohen and Kristan Patenaude, around Buck Meadow.

Rob Clemens stated that some from the Commission attended a vernal pool walk last Friday. There was one vernal pool area identified at Buck Meadow during the walk. He noted that Matt Tarr, wildlife state specialist through the UNH Extension, would also like to hold a future tree identification event.

Bill Widmer stated that the DPW and Recreation Department are ready to plant two trees at Buck Meadow, one disease-resistant elm and one sycamore. He noted that he brought phosphite to treat the chestnut trees at Bragdon Farm. Lastly, he explained that there will soon be signage installed at the small pocket park/fishing area down near the Town beach.

Rob Clemens stated that the Town has received notice that the DOT will be appraising a section of Bragdon in Bedford regarding a State project to replace the culvert under Route 101. Due to the new stormwater regulations, a treatment swale will be required for the newly paved area, which will be located on ACC property. He will be meeting with Eric Hahn and representatives from the State to discuss this item. Bill Stoughton stated that this is one of the most beautiful and valuable pieces of property in Bedford and he hopes this is recognized during the appraisal of this project.

Rob Clemens noted that Vick Bennison, Lee Gilman, Mike Cohen, and Bill Widmer are all up for renewal this year for their positions on the ACC. He suggested that, if any of these members are interested in staying on the Commission, they indicate as much to the Board of Selectmen.

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220 Rob Clemens stated that the Commission's second meeting of the month would likely be
221 canceled, due to lack of agenda items. The Commission will next meet on June 9, 2021.

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223 **Vick Bennison moved to adjourn at 8:20pm. John Harvey seconded.**

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227 *Respectfully submitted,*

228 *Kristan Patenaude*

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230 Minutes approved: June 9, 2021