

TOWN OF AMHERST
Conservation Commission

December 8, 2021

APPROVED

In attendance: Rob Clemens – Chair, John Harvey, Jared Hardner, Rich Hart, Lee Gilman, Peter Lyon – BOS Ex-Officio, Bill Widmer, Mike Cohen (Alternate, remote), Bill Stoughton (Alternate), and Christian Littlefield (Alternate).

Staff present: Kristan Patenaude – Recording Secretary (remote).

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

ADMINISTRATIVE:

1. Chair Comments

Rob Clemens welcomed Christian Littlefield, new alternate Commissioner.

2. Minutes: November 10, 2021

Jared Hardner moved to approve the meeting minutes of November 10, 2021, as written. John Harvey seconded.

Voting: Rob Clemens – aye, John Harvey - aye, Lee Gilman –aye, Bill Widmer - aye, Rich Hart - aye, and Jared Hardner – aye; 6-0-0 motion carried.

3. Treasurer's Report

The Commission reviewed the Treasurer's Report. He noted that a generous donation from the Rapfs was recently approved into the Gift Account. A number of donations were received in Vick Bennison's honor. After offsetting the cost of his memorial bench, there is approximately \$400-500 additionally.

Rob Clemens explained that there was a previous proposal by VCS for three days of work at \$3,750/day (not to exceed \$11,250). This was for work to be completed at Pond Parish, the Wheeler property, and others as needed. Invoices from VCS were received in November totalling in excess of what was authorized, approximately \$17,500. A letter was sent to VCS to discuss this item, but no response has been received. Lee Gilman stated that the work was completed, as requested, by VCS over the three days. Rob Clemens stated that VCS may have done more work than they were authorized to do, and suggested that the Commission should pay them only for the amount authorized, until further conversation can be had.

Jared Hardner moved to authorize Bill Widmer to pay \$11,250 (as previously authorized) of the current VCS invoice. Jared Hardner seconded.

Voting: Rob Clemens – aye, John Harvey - aye, Lee Gilman –aye, Bill Widmer - aye, Rich Hart - aye, and Jared Hardner – aye; 6-0-0 motion carried.

Jared Hardner moved to approved the Treasurer's Report, as presented. John Harvey seconded.

Voting: Rob Clemens – aye, John Harvey - aye, Lee Gilman –aye, Bill Widmer - aye, Rich Hart - aye, and Jared Hardner – aye; 6-0-0 motion carried.

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46 **4. Planning & Permitting**

47 Bill Stoughton explained that next Wednesday the Planning Board will have a public hearing on
48 the proposed Stone Farm property located on Route 101. That same evening, the Board will have
49 a public hearing on the proposed amendments to the zoning ordinances. Some of these changes
50 look to make the ordinance's stormwater provisions consistent with the ACC recommended
51 regulations that were approved last year. The first meeting in January will see a continued
52 hearing for the Clearview property.
53

54 Also, the Bon Terrain project has requested an amendment to their wetlands Conditional Use
55 Permit (CUP) due to a stormwater management feature change. The applicant is requesting to
56 increase the size of a bioretention chamber on site instead of a stormwater feature on an adjacent
57 property, but the end result will likely be the same for stormwater treatment. Bill Stoughton
58 noted that a proposed easement for the site lacks a monitoring right given to a certain group for
59 compliance.
60

61 **TOPICS**

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63 **5. Master Planning Update**

64 Jared Hardner explained that the Master Plan Steering Committee had its first public forum. He
65 noted that it was poorly attended. There will be a second public forum in the spring. There was a
66 concern raised at the last Committee meeting by Mike Akillian that actionable language should
67 be forwarded to the public now, so that input can be received early and often. He believes there
68 is merit to that discussion. He suggested that the Commission consider sketching some ideas for
69 actionable items for water resources, as this was noted by the public in the survey as being an
70 important topic.
71

72 Bill Stoughton noted that the ACC previously agreed to review a number of Town ordinances
73 dealing with water resources. This suggestion would be in line with that.
74

75 Rich Hart suggested that this language could also include items regarding climate change.
76

77 Mike Cohen agreed that water should be thought of in a broader context, and the Commission
78 can then look into mitigation processes. He asked how the Commission can make sure that this
79 item can be driven into the Master Plan.
80

81 Jared Hardner stated that the Commission can start doing some of these items from the bottom-
82 up, instead of waiting for it to come from the top-down. The Commission can work on the
83 framework for water resources that can then be reviewed at the next public forum.
84

85 Further work on this item will be coordinated by Jared Hardner.
86

87 **6. Eagle Scout Project Guidance**

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Rob Clemens noted that it is the Scout's responsibility to present their projects to the Commission for acceptance. The group discussed setting up a future time to hear the presentations.

Jared Hardner noted that an Eagle Scout project the ACC approved two years ago has just become active. The Scout is working on a trail along the Arnold easement.

7. Other Business

John Harvey explained that he recently spoke with Recreation Director, Craig Fraley, about mowing at Buck Meadow. The center area will be mowed annually by the Recreation Department. The indented areas will likely be mowed every few years. The brush will only be mowed if saplings start to take over the area.

Jared Hardner explained that the center area will include cross-country ski trails that can be groomed for the property. These areas will thus not impact the areas that will be left to grow for multiple years. Cross-country skiers can use the trails around the property as well.

John Harvey explained that a crosswalk between the Amherst Street sidepath into the Atherton Trail has not been created yet, due to there not being a flat space to enter into which does not meet the crosswalk standards. This is currently being examined by DPW.

John Harvey explained that Horace Greeley Road is in the DPW's budget to be repaved. The Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee is suggesting including in this work a crosswalk to connect the portions of Old Mail Road bisected by Horace Greeley Road. There may be funding needed to complete this project.

Rob Clemens explained that he sat in on a Hollis Conservation Commission meeting last week. That group is concerned with Witches Brook and the temperatures within. He asked the Commission its feelings about partnering with Conservation Commissions from Merrimack, Bedford, Milford, and Mont Vernon for certain projects or other items. The Commission agreed to review this in the future.

Rob Clemens explained that the Bragdon Farm sign and fencing was recently knocked down by a car accident. The Bragdon Farm sign is now missing. DPW is willing to fix these items if the sign can be found. Rob Clemens noted that the Great Meadow sign was recently split by a fallen tree limb. He suggested that this be remade and replaced.

Jared Hardner moved to expend up to \$400 to replace the Great Meadow sign from the Signage budget line. John Harvey seconded.

Voting: Rob Clemens – aye, John Harvey - aye, Lee Gilman –aye, Bill Widmer - aye, Rich Hart - aye, and Jared Hardner – aye; 6-0-0 motion carried.

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Rich Hart explained that he and Lee Gilman recently visited a Souhegan High School science class to present on invasive species. The students will work to examine areas around the school to see which species are present in the spring.

The Commission discussed burning a large pile of brush at the Great Meadow as a community event put on by the ACC. Rich Hart agreed that he would speak with the Recreation Department about coordinating this.

Lee Gilman noted that he recently cleared invasives at PMEC, along the trails and around the pond.

The Commission discussed delivery of the Vick Bennison memorial bench during the second week of January.

Jared Hardner moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:47. John Harvey seconded.

Voting: Rob Clemens – aye, John Harvey - aye, Lee Gilman –aye, Bill Widmer - aye, Rich Hart - aye, and Jared Hardner – aye; 6-0-0 motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Kristan Patenaude

Minutes approved: January 12, 2022