

TOWN OF AMHERST
Conservation Commission

January 12, 2022

APPROVED

In attendance: Rob Clemens – Chair, John Harvey, Jared Hardner, Rich Hart, Peter Lyon – BOS
Ex-Officio, Frank Montesanto, 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 thanked all those involved with helping to place the Vick Bennison memorial
bench on the Bacon Trail.

2. Minutes: December 8, 2021

Christian Littlefield sat for Bill Widmer.

**Rob Clemens moved to approve the meeting minutes of December 8, 2021, as
written. John Harvey seconded.**

**Voting: Rob Clemens – aye, John Harvey - aye, Christian Littlefield –aye, Frank
Montesanto - aye, Rich Hart - aye, and Jared Hardner – aye; 6-0-0 motion carried.**

3. Treasurer's Report

Rob Clemens explained that Bill Widmer's latest Treasurer's Report shared information
regarding a more indepth report on the Commission's finances.

John Harvey stated that the Conservation Commission fund is short almost a quarter of a million
dollars, due to issues with the Finance Department getting caught up. This could hurt the ACC's
chances to aquire property in the future. Rob Clemens agreed that some money seems to be in
the wrong buckets at this time, and that makes it difficult to know how much funding the ACC
has available. He believes the Town Administrator and Finance staff will continue to work to
right any issues.

**Bill Stoughton moved to approve the Treasurer's Report, as presented. John
Harvey seconded.**

**Voting: Rob Clemens – aye, John Harvey - aye, Christian Littlefield –aye, Frank
Montesanto - aye, Rich Hart - aye, and Jared Hardner – aye; 6-0-0 motion carried.**

4. Planning & Permitting

Bill Stoughton explained that the draft ordinance amendments completed a second public
hearing. These include the amended stormwater regulations. This will all now be placed on the
ballot in March. The Clearview proposal will come back before the Planning Board in early
February.

a. Hazen Property Conceptual Plan – Chad Branon, Fieldstone Land Consultants

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Chad Branon introduced Brett Vaughn, explaining that Mr. Vaughn has an option on this property. The site consists of seven parcels, totaling 354 acres. There is a significant amount of wetlands that cross some of the properties. Lot 4-122 is approximately 22 acres and has frontage along Cricket Corner Road. Lot 4-125 has frontage along Upham Road and County Road and is approximately 15.9 acres. Lot 4-116 is approximately 46 acres, and Lot 4-118 is approximately 44 acres with significant frontage along County Road. Lot 6-102 is approximately 149 acres, with frontage on County Road and Spring Road. Lot 4-119 is approximately 20 acres in size and is land locked. Finally, Lot 4-121 is approximately 56 acres with frontage along County Road and Upham Road; there is an existing farmhouse on this lot.

Mr. Branon explained that Mr. Vaughn would like to create a conventional subdivision on these lots, using existing roads. Some of the lots will be subdivided into oversized residential lots. Creating larger lots will make sure they are not further subdivided in the future, promoting some amount of conservation. Lot 4-125 is proposed to be subdivided into five lots. In the areas where existing roads are paved, there will be adequate frontage to meet requirements. Lot 4-116 is proposed to be subdivided into eight lots, with frontage lots along Cricket Corner Road and County Road, with one large lot in the back. Lot 4-121 is proposed to have four, large frontage lots. The intention is to keep the existing farmhouse and place it onto its own property. There are lots proposed along a portion of County Road with approximately 300-350' of frontage, attempting to maintain the rural character of the area. The intention is that this proposal will not require significant offsite improvements. The north side of County Road is also proposed to have lots with 300+' of frontage. A significant conservation lot is proposed on the property. There will be some wetland buffers impacts, but these will not require a crossing. Additional impacts to wetlands and steep slopes on the property are not proposed at this time. A few lots are proposed off Spring Road in this layout.

Mr. Branon explained that the entire development proposes 48 buildable lots. Conventional subdivision calculations have been carried out on these properties in the past and yielded approximately 90 lots. The proposed conservation property is approximately 145 acres. Mr. Vaughn is currently considering gifting this to the Town, or otherwise creating a conservation lot. Mr. Branon noted that Mr. Vaughn does not have much time to act on his option on this property.

Rich Hart noted that this area has 2-acre zoning. He asked how many of the lots are proposed to have 4-acres or more. Mr. Branon stated that approximately 50% will be 4-acres or more. Rich Hart asked what will stop someone from buying one of the larger lots and subdividing it. Mr. Branon explained that 300' of frontage is proposed for these lots, so there will not be enough road frontage to subdivide them further.

In response to a question from Rob Clemens, Mr. Branon stated that this proposal is considering on-site wells for the properties. Individual septic systems are also proposed.

Rob Clemens noted that one of the ACC's interests in the property is the aquifer that runs under a portion of the property and making sure it is conserved. The outflow for this is on one of the

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lots proposed to be subdivided. He also noted that the ACC would not like to see the Spring Road corridor broken up into lots. These lots may have to be accessed using water crossings.

Will Ludt, Chair of the Heritage Commission, noted that there is a possible Native American site off Upham Road. He would like to see this area marked and protected until this can be determined. He has contacted DHR regarding examining the site.

In response to a question from Rob Clemens, Mr. Branon stated that the goal is to find a balance that does not require substantial improvements to the infrastructure in this area. If County Road needs to be paved, additional density may need to be added. The intention is to preserve the rural setting. The goal is to meet with the Fire Department, Police Department, and DPW to determine the best course of action.

Jared Hardner noted that larger lots and more conservation area is preferred, in his mind. He asked that Mr. Vaughn consider coming back to the Town's Open Space Advisory Committee to discuss the possibility of selling or donating pieces that will not be used.

Bill Stoughton stated that he will not comment on the merits of the proposal, until it is presented to the Planning Board. He asked when the conceptual design will be brought to the Planning Board. Mr. Vaughn explained that the due diligence period is until February 1, 2022. There will likely not be time to get onto the Planning Board's agenda before this period ends unless an extension is sought.

Mr. Branon noted that he believes clustering homes on these properties would incur more impacts and reduce the rural nature of the area.

TOPICS

5. Eagle Scout Presentation – Jack Benner

Rob Clemens explained that Jack Benner is the Eagle Scout who proposed the canoe port off Boston Post Road. Under the new Boy Scout Policy, the scout must present the project to the ACC.

Jack Benner explained that the area had a lot of weeds that he cleared out while mowing. Two fundraisers for this project were hosted at Shaw's. These efforts totaled \$1,695, and the project total was \$1,710. This is a structure that can be removed and raised seasonally. In addition to building the stairs and the ramp, he also had a bench installed for the public. He stated that the project was due to be completed in July, but, due to permitting issues, he was able to complete it quickly in November. The Eagle Scout Board did not have any concerns about his project when he presented it to them.

The Commission thanked Jack Benner for his well-thought out and executed project.

6. Water Resources Workgroup Report

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Rob Clemens explained that a few people gathered to consider the key questions for water resource protection moving forward and what the Master Plan Steering Committee should address under this topic. A number of work items were identified that the Master Plan consultants may be able to follow up on.

Jared Hardner explained that this was the number one interest identified by the community for the Master Plan update. The end point should be recommendations on what the Town can do going forward to protect water resources, including changing how development happens, and changing how people use fertilizers/pesticides.

In response to a question from Rich Hart, Rob Clemens explained that this process is seeking information about items such as water quality in Town, water quantity in regard to drinking water in Town, forecasted flood events, flood plain delineations and their adequacy for planning purposes, the zoning ordinances in regard to flood plains, wetland delineations, and instream flows and their preservation.

This group will plan to meet again next week.

7. Invasive Controls Projects/Outreach – Lee Gilman

This item will be tabled to a future meeting.

8. Other Business

Jared Hardner noted that there is another Eagle Scout project currently being carried out to create a new trail. He has been supervising the project and it is expected to be presented to the Commission at its February meeting.

Jared Hardner moved to expend \$66 from the Signage budget for new trail signs on the Arnold property. John Harvey seconded.

Voting: Rob Clemens – aye, John Harvey - aye, Christian Littlefield –aye, Frank Montesanto - aye, Rich Hart - aye, and Jared Hardner – aye; 6-0-0 motion carried.

Jared Hardner noted that the Commission's website is due for its annual renewal.

Jared Hardner moved to expend \$140 from the Educational Outreach budget line to renew the Commission's website. John Harvey seconded.

Voting: Rob Clemens – aye, John Harvey - aye, Christian Littlefield –aye, Frank Montesanto - aye, Rich Hart - aye, and Jared Hardner – aye; 6-0-0 motion carried.

John Harvey noted that a new sign is ready to be installed at the Great Meadow.

Rob Clemens explained that a name plate has been created for Christian Littlefield that the Commission needs to pay for.

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Rob Clemens moved to expend \$16.75 from the Signage budget line for Christian Littlefield's name plate. Bill Stoughton seconded.

Rob Clemens withdrew this motion for further consideration.

Rob Clemens explained that an appraisal (previously approved as an expenditure) for certain parcels for possible open space acquisition is currently underway. It is hoped that these will be completed by the end of this month.

Rich Hart stated that he may be interested in restarting the monthly conservation articles, previously written by Bruce Beckley. He is trying to decide where this could be hosted.

Jared Hardner stated that there could be a place for articles on the ACC's website. He also noted that, outside of social media, he is unsure that people still read longer written articles, unfortunately. Rich Hart stated that he could also create some educational videos for posting.

Rob Clemens stated that the DPW is proposing to replace the culvert on Spring Road this year. He is in talks with the DPW about possibly placing a beaver deceiver in this area during this project.

Rob Clemens noted that the next Commission meeting is proposed to be on the same day as the Town's Deliberative Session, February 12, 2022. The Commission will tentatively meet for its second February meeting date, but could call a special meeting, if necessary.

Jared Hardner moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:57pm. John Harvey seconded. Voting: Rob Clemens – aye, John Harvey - aye, Christian Littlefield –aye, Frank Montesanto - aye, Rich Hart - aye, and Jared Hardner – aye; 6-0-0 motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned.

*Respectfully submitted,
Kristan Patenaude*

Minutes approved: February 23, 2022