

**Town of Amherst
Conservation Commission Meeting
Wednesday October 12, 2016**

Attendance: D. D'Angelo- Chair, J. Harvey, R. Clemens, R. Hart, L. Gilman, V. Bennison, W. Robertson, P. Lyon- Selectman Ex-Officio, B. Beckley- Alt, J. Hardner-Alt and Community Development Director G. Leedy

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:03pm.

G. Leedy introduced himself to the Conservation Commission as the new Director of Community Development.

Administrative Reports

Minutes

Amendments to the minutes of September 25th include: Planning Board update should be – *R. Hart*
R. Clemens moved and V. Bennison seconded to approve the minutes of September 25th as amended.

Vote: All in favor

Finance Report- John

John stated there is \$504,000 in the account in Enterprise Bank. This is a new bank that gives more interest. He looked into using a credit union, but after talking to the state decided he couldn't go that route. He described the deposits and expenses for the past month. He would like to meet with other members of the Conservation Commission to confirm some figures.

The NHACC annual dues is \$629. **John moved to pay the NHACC \$629 for annual dues. Lee seconded. All in favor**

Planning Board Update- Rich

Rich reported that there was discussion about construction of a building in the commercial zone. The Planning Board also discussed looking at changing the zoning on Rte. 101. There was a committee that was discussing this early in the year and that group is being reassembled to look at this issue again.

Topics/ Invited Guests

Shoreland Applications

- 20 Clark Island Rd

Daryl reported there was building happening on the shoreline of Baboosic. The owners are from out of state and didn't have a permit. They couldn't find any helpful guidance online. Daryl put the owners in touch with DES. Daryl believes it would be helpful to post on the Amherst website what the permitting process is for properties on waterfront. The permitting process in the town offices seems confused. G. Leedy said he is looking into the permitting process in the building. He will continue to distribute materials to the appropriate departments/ boards as they come in.

- Great Meadow

Daryl informed Zack Anton, an Eagle Scout candidate, that his boardwalk project in the Great Meadow was never permitted and Daryl put the applicant in touch with DES.

Budget

John stated the BOS would like the Conservation Commission's budget for fiscal 2018. The current Conservation Commission town budget is \$14,500. Tonight John would like to fill in the line item amounts for the proposed FY 2018 budget.

The Conservation Commission discussed which line items should go in the town budget and which in the Conservation Fund and the amount of money that should go in each town budget line item.

Line items discussed included: meadows, invasives, planning project/ contractors for expertise, Lindabury Forest Management, Bruce's proposal for GWPP area, Betty Arnold Forest and trails, Flume at Joppa Hill, Haseltine, infrastructure and education.

After the line items were entered, the proposed FY 2018 budget was \$20,555. The Conservation Commission discussed the process from this point, budget due dates and presentation to the BOS.

The Conservation Commission discussed forming a sub-committee for dealing with invasives.

Management Areas

Water Resources- Rob

Rob explained that there is an interest in town in looking into water protection and preservation in Amherst. The group is currently researching water data that will increase water knowledge to help when decisions need to be made. This research should define what we know, don't know and need to find out about surface water and ground water. The Conservation Commission should think about what its responsibilities are regarding water and what parts of the project are most important.

Daryl stated she is more worried with future water issues due to climate change and finding out how we can protect ourselves.

G. Leedy informed the Conservation Commission that his department is currently looking to hire a Planner with GIS capabilities. The Conservation Commission discussed how this person could assist with mapping projects.

Rob proposed that a sub-committee be formed to work on the water resources assessment. G. Leedy said that he and B. Berry (DPW) will take the lead regarding regulations.

Meadows/ Forests/ Invasives- Lee

- Lee reported they had a great work day picking up the rocks
- Lee ordered three types of seed in bulk and can give it out to anyone who is going out so they can put some down where needed. He described the various types he has.
- He reported that South Joppa was sprayed for invasives

Infrastructure- Frank (Daryl)

This item was tabled as Frank wasn't present.

Trails

- Agreements and Secure Access

Daryl stated that trail agreements and easements should be written out and filed so that access to the trails is not lost. The highest level of commitment is through an easement. The next level down is a trail agreement which can be broken under some circumstances. Then there are some properties that have allowed public use due to a 'hand-shake deal'. Daryl posed the question as to whether the Conservation

Commission's time and money should be spent on trails that don't have written agreements. Several examples were discussed.

Wes said he prefers to prioritize working on trails that are on town-owned land. The consensus of the Conservation Commission seemed to be to only spend minimal time and money on trails that lack written agreements. The Conservation Commission agreed that Bruce should continue working on the Converse/ Grater Woods connection with minimal cost.

- Trail Stewards

Vick is now in charge of the trail stewards. **Vick moved to spend up to \$500 on blazes (multiple colors) which will come out of the Town budget. R. Clemens seconded. All in favor**

Bruce left the meeting at this time. (10:00pm)

Easements and Properties- Daryl

- Monitoring and Costs- Warrant Article for LUCT? Trust Fund? Capital Reserve?

Daryl explained that land trusts put money into a monitoring fund. The ACC has never asked for a fund. The key to monitoring is owner relations. The Conservation Commission needs to go out and walk the easements with the owners once a year.

The Conservation Commission discussed monitoring the trails and agreed this hasn't been occurring, but needs to start. They also decided they do not need to set money aside for this. They do need to gather a list of the properties with easements, find and print the terms, create a monitoring form that is taken out to the sites, notify the owner and set up appointments to start monitoring. Daryl has completed the first two items and can quickly do the third as there are many examples on line. The monitoring process should be able to begin this month.

Management Planning

Regarding the management plan for the conservation plan, John and Jared have written both the Purpose and the legislative rules and the regulations the Conservation Commission has to follow. They will get that out to other members for editing/ review.

Jared stated he has been in touch with Google because all of the various mapping systems use some portion of Google information and that information is not up to date regarding the trails. He will work with them to correct this issue so that moving forward the maps will be accurate.

- WAP layer- MapGeo

WAP- Wildlife Action Plan is a state generated set of GIS maps that provide shaded colors for value of habitat. Amherst has 3-4 'best in state' areas for certain types of wildlife.

MapGeo- NRPC runs this and they've added new layers. John has asked them to add a WAP layer which will aid the Conservation Commission in land acquisition decisions. NRPC informed him this will cost \$500 to make it happen. Daryl has reached out to neighboring communities to see if they will share the cost.

- Policies and Procedures- Kiosk Standards

Daryl would like to appoint a Trails committee to hash out trail and kiosk standards the Conservation Commission doesn't currently have. Citizens can be part of the committee. Wes and John from the Conservation Commission along with Will Ludt and potentially members of the trail stewards will be part of the committee. John asked Daryl to write up a paragraph and she said she would. **Vick moved to establish a sub-committee for the purpose of standardizing trails/kiosks. John seconded. All in favor**

Lee moved to establish a sub-committee for dealing with and educating the community on invasives. Rob seconded. All in favor

Education and Outreach

- Website update

Rich informed the Conservation Commission that he had been unable to update the website because of an issue that the school has now fixed. He has added text to the meadow management and the invasives management pages. There is old information on other management that should be looked at on the website. Rich would eventually like to have our new management plan on there as well as educational items such as how to identify invasives and what to do with them. He asked the Conservation Commission to look at what's there and let him know what needs to be updated.

- Converse Woods & Betty Arnold Forest- write up for BOS and Press Release

Daryl said two properties have been renamed and she would like to do a write up and inform the BOS and have them read something at one of their meetings. Wes will reach out to the Arnold family to inform them of what has been happening and maybe get them to write something. Rich suggested the Conservation Commission put a photo and a write up of Betty in the kiosk.

Round Table

This item was tabled.

V. Bennison moved to adjourn at 10:46pm. J. Harvey seconded. Vote: All in favor

Respectfully submitted,
Jessica Marchant