

**Town of Amherst
Conservation Commission Meeting
Wednesday March 8, 2017**

Attendance: D. D'Angelo- Chair, R. Clemens, L. Gilman, R. Hart, V. Bennison, P. Lyon- Selectman Representative, J. Hardner (Alt) and Frank Montesanto (Alt) Staff: Planner S. Corson

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:00pm and stated Jared will vote for W. Robertson.

Administrative Reports

Chair comments

The Chair wanted to comment on the idea of trust. Though we should perhaps be able to work on the trust of a "handshake deal", when it comes to working with finances and 'The People's Business', it is not a responsible practice.

R. Hart agreed. The ACC or Town of Amherst will outlast any individuals representing those organizations and agreements need to be strong enough to outlast the individuals that made the verbal agreement.

Minutes-Sunday February 19th and Thursday February 23rd

R. Clemens moved to accept the minutes of February 19th as submitted. L. Gilman seconded.

Vote: 4 in favor with R. Hart and J. Hardner abstaining

February 23rd

Line 29/30 'there is a tree on the ACC property with risk concerns'

Line 39/40 'Austin Rd property with Mr. Austin'

R. Clemens moved to approve the minutes of February 23rd as amended. V. Bennison seconded.

Vote: All in favor with J. Hardner abstaining

Finance Report

Postponed to March 22nd

Planning Board Update- Rich

Rich reported the Planning Board heard a case from Clark Island Rd which the ACC had heard previously. There was much discussion about the two-bedroom septic after seeing the design plans which include two bedrooms, a study and a playroom. The vote was 3-3 so the chair had to vote and ended up voting in favor.

Topics

- **Land Committee- Tax acquisitions need ACC recommendation – vote**

Daryl needs a recommendation from the ACC to give to the land committee as to whether the ACC wants to permanently conserve specific Town-owned properties. The ACC members have researched a number of the properties for their conservation value. The ACC reviewed the spreadsheet of information found on each property and discussed the values and issues of specific lots.

The process for permanently conserving the lots would be to draw up a deed that lists all of the lots at once and state they will be managed by the ACC.

The consensus was to conserve all of the lots listed in the document except for the three Glover lots.

R. Clemens moved to recommend to the land committee that all of the lots in this batch except the three Glover lots be further conserved with permanent language. J. Hardner seconded. All in favor

- **Black Bear Trail**

The ACC walked the proposed, flagged trail on Sunday. R. Clemens stated the flagged route itself is fine with the minor adjustments that were discussed on site. The issue is part of the trail crosses private property and the ACC has no trail agreement with the owners. Two signs would have to be posted showing where the ACC land ends. It is a nice trail and would connect two established ACC trails, but he won't commit ACC resources to a trail that goes off ACC land without an agreement with the landowner. L. Gilman clarified that one owner is in support of the trail and the other is not. The owners are not willing to sign an agreement, but are willing to let the trail go through.

D. D'Angelo agreed it's a beautiful site, but she saw a posted 'No Trespassing' sign when she was there. She is uncomfortable putting an ACC trail on posted land.

P. Lyon agreed that if we have asked for a signed agreement and can't get one, that is our answer. The ACC shouldn't take on any potential liability issues by moving forward.

V. Bennison agreed that he is uncomfortable with the situation. The ACC wouldn't want to post the trail on its maps without having that agreement.

The ACC decided if the land is posted No Trespassing, the trail is a no-go. If Bruce puts a trail in that location, it will not be supported by the ACC or mapped or posted as an ACC trail. R. Clemens will let Bruce know of the decision.

- **Arnold Property (Sky Meadow)- site walk review**

Negotiations: the owner is getting an estimate of cost to finish the survey and the appraisal.

The ACC will be paying off the mortgage and splitting the costs of the survey and appraisal. All of the land is to be conserved forever in its natural state of grass meadows.

F. Montesanto arrived at this time. (8:15pm)

Management Areas

Water Resources- Rob

Rob and Jared met to discuss the conservation management plan to work on the criteria of our wetlands CUP- related decision making process. Rob wants to get the hydrology maps that the town has imported or scanned into the tools we are building in the conservation plan which will help make looking at water values more detailed. Simon can help Rob bring the information into useful formats.

Meadows, Forests, Invasives- Lee

- The ACC discussed Charlie coming in to a meeting on March 22nd or April 26th
- J. Hardner mentioned he is bringing in a wildlife ecologist from UNH to look at a site and possibly to attend and present at a meeting
- L. Gilman stated he should get an invasive permit by the end of the month

Infrastructure

- F. Montesanto was sent multiple pictures of damage from the recent weather issues. The B + H Bridge at the bottom of the staircase was hit by a tree and needs to be removed. A handrail along the stairs also needs to be repaired. The ACC discussed possibly ripping out that staircase eventually because it is hazardously steep.

- A huge tree went down on the Bicentennial trail. The trail now needs to jog around the tree.

Trails/Properties

Topic not discussed

Conservation Management Planning

J. Hardner is at the point where he can't advance the plan any further until actions are taken by the sub-committees.

Round Table

Announcements for meeting guests:

Town Counsel Bill Drescher will attend the April 12th ACC meeting to discuss old trail agreements and easements that specify use and specifically disallow bikes.

The NRPC may attend that meeting as well.

Jack will attend on March 22nd.

D. D'Angelo received a call from Asplandh to do some trimming under wires on the Scott land. The ACC had no issues with that.

J. Hardner mentioned the Noble property that is for sale and wondered if the Commission was going to discuss it. It is a very large property and includes a portion of the Bicentennial Trail. D. D'Angelo will look to see if the ACC has a trail agreement or easement on that land for the trail.

This property being for sale changes the vulnerability of the Brook Rd property. The ACC discussed researching options for acquiring the Noble property.

F. Montesanto talked with Jack and the Lower Orchard might get some bluebird houses put in.

D. D'Angelo stated EPA and tax code changes potentially affect the ACC. The ACC is the local authority and therefore needs to be informed and take care with decisions and processes.

W. Ludt (Heritage Commission) mentioned the metal detection policy group will be meeting in April.

L. Gilman moved to adjourn at 8:49pm. V. Bennison seconded. All in favor

Respectfully submitted,

Jessica Marchant