

TOWN OF AMHERST  
Conservation Commission

November 16, 2020

**APPROVED**

In attendance via Zoom: Rob Clemens – Chair, Jared Hardner, John Harvey, Vick Bennison, Frank Montesanto, Rich Hart, Peter Lyon – BOS Ex-Officio, Mike Cohen (Alternate), Bill Widmer (Alternate), and Bill Stoughton (Alternate).

Staff present: Natasha Kypfer – Town Planner, Kristan Patenaude – minute taker.

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 #312-626-6799 and password 848 9629 3658, or by clicking on the following website address: <https://zoom.us/j/84896293658> 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 Planning Board at: [www.amherstnh.gov](http://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.

**Rob Clemens, Jared Hardner, John Harvey, Mike Cohen, Vick Bennison, Bill Stoughton, Rich Hart, Bill Widmer, and Peter Lyon – all present and alone.**

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ADMINISTRATIVE:

**1. Chair Comments** – none.

**2. Minutes (10/14)**

**John Harvey moved to accept the minutes of October 14, 2020, as amended [Line 222, change “lead” to “least.”] Vick Bennison seconded.**

**Roll call: Vick Bennison – aye; Rob Clemens – aye; John Harvey – abstain; Rich Hart - aye; and Jared Hardner – aye. 4-1-0; motion carried.**

**3. Treasurer’s Report**

Bill Widmer reviewed the Treasurer’s Report. He explained that there should be about \$33,000 of LUCT funds still to come to the ACC.

**Jared Hardner moved to accept the Treasurer’s Report. Vick Bennison seconded.**

**Roll call: Vick Bennison – aye; Rob Clemens – aye; John Harvey – aye; Rich Hart - aye; and Jared Hardner – aye. Motion carried unanimously.**

**4. Planning & Permitting**

Bill Stoughton explained that the Planning Board will be hearing from the Prew/Clearview proposed development on Wednesday. The ACC will soon be hearing a Wetland CUP from the proposed Carlson Manor development. This CUP is due to proposed stormwater controls being located in the wetland buffers for this proposed project. He is concerned that having the controls that close to the wetlands won’t allow for the water to cool enough before it enters the Brook, thus contributing to the increasing temperature of the Brook.

Rob Clemens explained that a site walk of the Carlson Manor site showed not much water currently running through the site. The wetlands are apparently two drainage ditches that were constructed a long time ago. The wetlands on the site weren’t marked, so it was difficult to determine the buffers from the wetlands themselves. Peacock Brook is a Class A stream, so the development will be required to trap all of the stormwater runoff; it will be infiltrated into gravel wetlands created on site. He requested that the ACC take a hard look at the CUP relative to the proposed infiltration process.

Bill Stoughton stated that the water temperature concerns of the site fall to the ACC to determine what can be done. The ordinance states that stormwater controls should be kept out of the buffer all together; if the controls need to be within the buffer, it should be to a minimum. He explained that, if the proposed density of the site was lowered, it might solve the problem of getting the controls out of the buffers and complying with the ordinance.

Rich Hart stated that he believes one of the issues with the Carlson Manor site is creating a buffer for the two small streams on site. The temperature of these streams could be protected by shaded plants and trees.

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Bill Stoughton explained that he doesn't have a problem with the proposed landscape plan. He stated that the developer was asked to look into baseline water temperatures for the site but stated that there was no water on the site to examine. There was no effort made to look at the historic temperature in the Brook.

Bill Stoughton explained that the proposed stormwater regulations were submitted to the Planning Board, and then were sent to the Town Engineer, Town Counsel, and DES for comments. There will be a public hearing for this item at the Planning Board on December 16, 2020, with a potential vote to adopt.

## TOPICS

### **5. Forest Management Plan Update**

Jared Hardner explained that he and Charlie Koch, Town Forester, have been working to update the Forest Management Plan. This Forest Management Plan covers from 2020-2040. The ACC manages about 1,800 acres of forest land, suitable for Forest Management. He explained that most of the forests in Town are mid-aged forests. These do not have a great percentage of tree mortality or blowdowns. While there is not a lot of information on what the correct representation of forest ages in Amherst should be, the Town is probably underrepresented in both younger and old growth forests. If the ACC takes a hands-off approach, the Town will probably eventually get to a good representation of forests, but it may take about 200 years. Old growth forests in this area are very rare, and it's difficult to know what would come with them in terms of wildlife habitat, etc. If the warming trend continues, due to global warming, it is possible that New England will eventually have weather similar to that of North Carolina. This will also have an effect on forests in the area, and the ACC will need to figure that out into the future.

Jared Hardner explained that heterogeneity is good for forests. When the ACC began to manage forests in 1998, it was to improve the timber quality of forests stands and provide wildlife with browsing and coverage. In 2012, the ACC began to experiment with creating larger group openings with Dacquino Forest. In 2014, the ACC experimented with group-selected openings, without any thinning, in Caesar's Brook. The ACC held harvests of infested hemlocks in Haseltine in 2016. He explained that the effect of these cuts on the specific compositions of the forests, was not relative to what the group expected to achieve. The forests saw a lot of oak growth, but these have been quickly nibbled down by deer each year, leading to very slow regeneration. These cuts do not seem to be achieving the forest types that the ACC is looking for.

Jared Hardner stated that this Forest Management Plan proposes an adaptive approach. It looks to sustain the large block forests that the Town has and maintain unfragmented forests. The Plan has divided the holdings into approximately 200 stands, each with a list of about 40 measured variables. Using GIS, the stands can be searched by attribute.

Jared Hardner explained the different intervention types:

Type 1 – Control invasive species via herbicides and mechanical treatments.

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Type 2 – Diversify the age classes in forests via group-selected harvests and shelterwood.

Type 3 – Reduce stand densities via thinning harvests.

Type 4 – Establish sites for protection of old growth forests.

This management will be monitored and adaptive as it goes along.

In response to a question from Vick Bennison, Rob Clemens stated that the Piscataquog Land Trust would probably be interested in having a conversation with the ACC about invasive management on the Joppa Hill property.

In response to a question from Rob Clemens, Charlie Koch, stated that old growth forests, 100+ years old, are not common in NH at all. There is not much opportunity, in private landholdings or other in Amherst, to find this type of forest. The ACC is in a good position to create some of this type of forest by simply letting it grow.

Bill Stoughton questioned if the ACC should look into more extensive deer hunting, through longer hunting seasons or additional tags, due to the impact the deer population has on young oaks in forests.

Rob Clemens stated that the ACC should go back to the Board of Selectmen at some point and update them with this Forest Management Plan. The group can then work to educate the public and receive feedback on the Plan.

Jared Hardner noted that all of the proposed interventions should pay for themselves, except for possibly the invasive treatments.

## **6. ACC Website Proposal**

Rob Clemens explained that an RFP for this proposal has been created to send to vendors.

Mike Cohen explained that this bid process will move forward, with a request to have bids back by December 9, 2020. The proposal includes language that Phase I work on the project will be completed within 6 months of awarding the project.

Bill Stoughton requested that the new proposed ACC website coordinate with the existing Town website, such as for agendas and meeting minutes. He also requested that there be information about the cost of vendors maintaining the website over time.

**Rob Clemens moved to approve that the subcommittee proceed with coordination with the Town Administrator to release the RFP. John Harvey seconded.**

**Roll call: Vick Bennison – aye; Rob Clemens – aye; John Harvey – aye; Rich Hart - aye; Frank Montesanto - aye; and Jared Hardner – aye. Motion carried unanimously.**

## **7. Open Space Acquisition Warrant Article**

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Bill Stoughton explained that the Warrant Article was presented to the Planning Board and Board of Selectmen and received favorably. There has been work done to determine the cost of open space acquisitions in Amherst. There is an upward trend of cost/acreage, looking at around \$10-12,000/acre. There are legal concerns from Town Counsel regarding the language and structure of the Warrant Article, which are being resolved.

Bill Stoughton explained that an FAQ document can be created and circulated to the public. There will also be information regarding the translation of the cost of the Warrant Article to taxpayers.

#### **8. Other Business**

Frank Montesanto stated that he noticed the other day that the shed at Lindabury Orchard had its windows shot out. Peter Lyon suggested that the Police Department be notified.

John Harvey explained that bird boxes for bluebirds, screech owls, and American kestrels have been installed in Buck Meadow. He explained that Mark Worwitz has been monitoring the 5-6 birdboxes currently installed, but that there will need to be a citizen scientist volunteer monitoring these moving forward.

Will Ludt stated that the Heritage Commission will be sponsoring a hike/snowshoe event on January 9, 2021, from PMEC to the New Boston Air Force Station/Melendy foundation. An invitation will be sent to ACC members with details. This will be a precursor to a possible hike/race up Joe English Hill in June.

Jared Hardner stated that there is now a permanent trail through the Felsani Lot. This will connect the B&M rail trail, across Baboosic Lake Road, onto the Josiah Parker Trail. This will also connect to the Corn Crib Trail, which will be created.

Will Ludt explained that a certified archaeologist came out to look at the secondary Corn Crib structure. He will forward the report to the ACC.

The group discussed the signage budget.

**Jared Hardner moved to allocate up to \$500 from the signage account for the purchase of additional signs/blazes for trail work on the Felsani Lot and other lands. Vick Bennison seconded.**

**Roll call: Vick Bennison – aye; Rob Clemens – aye; John Harvey – aye; Rich Hart – aye; Frank Montesanto -aye; and Jared Hardner – aye. Motion carried unanimously.**

Rob Clemens explained that, as part of the NH Taking Action for Wildlife cohort classes that he and other Commissioners have been attending, a few people from the state will be coming to visit Buck Meadow on November 30<sup>th</sup> to complete an informal walkaround.

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221 The group discussed looking into hosting displays at the Library again.

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224 **Vick Bennison moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:07 PM. Frank Montesanto**  
225 **seconded. The meeting was adjourned.**

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228 *Respectfully submitted,*

229 *Kristan Patenaude*

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231 Minutes approved: December 23, 2020

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