

TOWN OF AMHERST
Conservation Commission

January 13, 2021

APPROVED-Amended

1 In attendance via Zoom : Rob Clemens – Chair, Jared Hardner, John Harvey, Peter Lyon – BOS
2 Ex-Officio, Vick Bennison, Rich Hart, Lee Gilman [7:06 pm] and Bill Stoughton (Alternate).
3 Staff present: Natasha Kypfer – Town Planner, and Kristan Patenaude – minute taker.
4

5 Chairman Rob Clemens called the online meeting to order at 7:00 pm, with the following
6 statement. As Chair of the Amherst Conservation Commission, I find that due to the State of
7 Emergency declared by the Governor as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and in
8 accordance with the Governor’s Emergency Order #12 pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04,
9 as extended by various Executive Orders, this public body is authorized to meet
10 electronically.

11 Please note that there is no physical location to observe and listen contemporaneously to this
12 meeting, which was authorized pursuant to the Governor’s Emergency Order.

13 However, in accordance with the Emergency Order, I am confirming that we are:

14 Providing public access to the meeting by telephone, with additional access possibilities by
15 video or other electronic means:

16 We are utilizing Zoom for this electronic meeting.
17

18 All members of the Board have the ability to communicate contemporaneously during this
19 meeting through this platform, and the public has access to contemporaneously listen and, if
20 necessary, participate in this meeting through dialing the following phone #312-626-6799
21 and password 828 5720 7032, or by clicking on the following website address:
22 <https://zoom.us/j/82857207032> that was included in the public notice of this meeting.
23

24 Providing public notice of the necessary information for accessing the meeting:

25 We previously gave notice to the public of the necessary information for accessing the
26 meeting, including how to access the meeting using Zoom or telephonically. Instructions
27 have also been provided on the website of the Planning Board at: www.amherstnh.gov.
28

29 Providing a mechanism for the public to alert the public body during the meeting if there are
30 problems with access: If anybody has a problem, please call 603-341-5290.
31

32 Adjourning the meeting if the public is unable to access the meeting:

33 In the event the public is unable to access the meeting, the meeting will be adjourned and
34 rescheduled.
35

36 Please note that all votes that are taken during this meeting shall be done by roll call vote.
37

38 Let’s start the meeting by taking a roll call attendance. When each member states their
39 presence, please also state whether there is anyone in the room with you during this meeting,
40 which is required under the Right-to- Know law.
41

42 **Rob Clemens, Jared Hardner, John Harvey, Vick Bennison, Bill Stoughton, Rich Hart,**
43 **and Peter Lyon – all present and alone.**
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ADMINISTRATIVE:

1. Chair Comments – none.

2. Minutes – none.

3. Treasurer's Report

The Commission discussed the existing budget for Educational Outreach and also for Educational Training & Professional Development and items that it might use the funds on.

Lee Gilman entered the meeting at 7:06pm.

Rob Clemens noted that there have been a few LUCT fund deposits into the Conservation Fund recently.

Jared Hardner moved to accept the Treasurer's Report. John Harvey seconded. Roll Call vote: Rob Clemens – aye; Vick Bennison – aye; Jared Hardner – aye; Rich Hart – aye; John Harvey – aye; and Lee Gilman – aye. 6-0-0; motion carried unanimously.

4. Planning & Permitting

Bill Stoughton explained that the ACC has not yet received the CUP application for Carlson Manor. This is due to the fact that the applicant has decided to move all of the proposed stormwater features on site out of the buffer. This should help to keep the temperatures cool in comparison to the stormwater features being proposed within the buffer.

Bill Stoughton stated that the Clearview proposal was discussed at the last Planning Board meeting. There is concern regarding the potential effect of the proposed number of wells on abutters. There is also concern about the proposed number of wells being adequate for the 49 proposed units. The applicant has had a hydrogeological study completed. The Planning Board is asking for an independent review of that study and to specifically look at concerns from the perspective of potential drought periods during the year. There is concern regarding planning around the 100-year floodplain and 50-year storms, while most of the hydrogeological studies are based on only average rainfall. The Town is close to retaining a third-party firm to examine these items.

Bill Stoughton noted that the proposed stormwater regulations were adopted by the Board of Health and are now going through the certification process.

TOPICS

5. Road Salting Proposal for Tamarack/Rhodora Drive

DPW Director, Eric Hahn, and Assistant DPW Director, Eric Slosek joined the Board. Eric Hahn explained that the ACC worked with the DPW last year in regard to the Town's road salt

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reduction. At the end of the previous year, these efforts were able to reduce salt usage by about 14 tons/storm. The ACC and DPW agreed to seek baseline readings at Ponemah Bog before deciding to treat nearby Tamarack Lane and Rhodora Drive the same as other roads in Town, and instead kept them as no-salt classified roads. These roads were only treated with sand over the winter. The baseline tests looked at salt and phosphorus. Sand usage in Town has been reduced by about 70%, which has had an impact on the amount of phosphorus entering the waterways and clogging the Town's drainage. This will also be reflected in the Town's budget, as there will be a reduction in street sweeping and catch basin cleaning. He explained that sanding the entire length of Rhodora Drive and Tamarack Lane only uses about two 5-gallon bucketfuls of sand, which is not unreasonable.

Jared Hardner stated that he is grateful to the DPW and the Bog volunteer, George Rollend, for their work on the monitoring effort. There is now some baseline data available. There is some salt in the water at the Bog, but not a lot. The proposal is to allow these roads to be salted, while continuing to monitor the Bog for any changes.

In response to a question from Rob Clemens, Eric Hahn explained that phosphorus is most likely associated with sand that has come from a pit. Eric Hahn explained that he is unclear as to how to test for phosphorus in the sand that is brought into Town, as it is not currently built into the RFP to do so.

In response to a question from Rob Clemens, Eric Hahn stated that he has received a couple of phone calls from residents of these two roads, Tamarack Lane and Rhodora Drive, regarding the no-salt treatment, but overall, he is most concerned about the health of the Bog and determining the effects of treatment on the water quality there first. During all of the last four snowstorm events this past year, the two roads were treated with sand only.

In response to a question from Rich Hart, Eric Slosek explained that the DPW does have magnesium chloride and calcium chloride on hand to use as treatment methods and that these are used relative to the temperature. Last year's storms tended to be on the warmer side and using these chemicals during that time would have actually made the roads more slippery, due to the chemical reaction involved. These chemicals are also much more expensive.

Lee Gilman explained that it is the chlorides remaining from these types of treatments that create a dense brine. This brine then flows into the wetlands, creating a water quality issue.

Rob Clemens explained that George Rollend and the Audubon Society will continue to be kept in the loop about any decisions being made in regard to the Bog. The groups are keeping a close eye on the wood frog population there, as it can be indicative of any problems. The ACC will support the DPW's proposal for these two roads to the Board of Selectmen.

6. Master Plan Survey Update

Jared Hardner shared some preliminary results from the Master Plan Survey, in regard to open space. The survey has had 1,641 responses, as of January 7, 2021.

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The #1 ranked reason that people stated they moved to Amherst was for the safe environment (thought to be items such as low crime rate and high-quality drinking water). The #2 reason listed was open space and conservation land in Town (78% strongly agreed/agreed). The #1 ranked priority of townspeople noted was to secure and preserve water resources in Town (85% highest/high priority). The #2 ranked priority was to maintain the rural character of Town (83% highest/high priority). Both of these priorities rely on the conservation of open space in Town. Jared Hardner explained that the results show that 54% of the respondents agree with lowering taxes in Town, but only 15% disagree with acquiring more open space in Town.

Jared Hardner explained that most current open space in Amherst is under private ownership and vulnerable to development. The only feasible option to achieve the citizen's priorities, as shown in the survey, is via land acquisitions. This cannot currently be done via zoning ordinances. The ACC's open space strategy includes criteria for water resource protection.

In response to a question from Rob Clemens, Jared Hardner stated that the survey will close next week. He will then update the ACC as to the next steps and the most viable strategy. Most likely, the important items will be broken down into themes so that working groups can then be sought to discuss these items. These groups will look to develop ideas the Town can use to achieve its goals, including that of open space.

7. Open Space Warrant Article

Rob Clemens explained that the Warrant Article was presented to the Board of Selectmen on Monday night at the public hearing. Some residents spoke on behalf of the Warrant Article. The presentation ended with a recommendation to lower the \$3M per year cap to \$2M. This recommendation was largely made due to feedback regarding the cost impact to taxpayers from a \$3M cap. That associated tax impact may be larger than the voting public is interested in supporting. The Board of Selectmen supported the Warrant Article with the revision 5-0. The Ways & Means Committee initially voted 4-3 to support the Warrant Article; this vote did not seem to change based on the revision. The Warrant Article will next be presented at the Town's Deliberative Session on February 3, 2021, at Souhegan High School. The ACC needs to work on getting information out to the public before the vote in March.

Bill Stoughton noted that the cost to an average home, if the Town purchases a \$1M property, thus preserving \$1M of open space in Town, would be less than \$20/year on the tax bill. He believes preserving open space will help to sustain property values in Town, as Amherst has been noted to be a desirable place to live, largely due to the fact that it has a safe and rural character. He believes acquiring open space is an investment for taxpayers.

Peter Lyon noted that getting the word out about Warrant Articles will be a challenge this year. It must largely be done through social media and word of mouth.

8. Web Page Development

John Harvey explained that the ACC authorized \$9,500 for three phases of a new website in the fall. This project was put out to bid in November and there were two no-bid replies, as each

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bidder requested more information on the project. He stated that what he believes people want from a new ACC website is a map, pictures/information, and how to help. He presented the ACC with the draft website. He explained that this website fulfills all of the original specs laid out for the project and is deployable at this time. The website was created through volunteer work. The next steps for the project are to develop more content, survey random users to determine if the website achieves its purpose and decide who will continue to update/manage the site.

Rob Clemens noted that Jared Hardner's daughter, Taylor, did most of the legwork for the website. Jared Hardner stated that Rachel Mazur completed a video that will be featured on the website as part of her Girl Scout Gold Star project.

Jared Hardner explained that, if the ACC decides to formalize this website, there is a one-time fee for the domain name, and then a cost per year for hosting the site. There is an option to include extra app-lets to be embedded into the site for additional costs, if the ACC decides to do so.

The ACC discussed who will monitor and update the website as needed and what type of content still needs to be added.

Jared Hardner moved to allocate up to \$250.00 to obtain the domain name and service to host the new website (~\$100 for the domain name and ~\$100 for the service) from the Educational Outreach budget line item. Vick Bennison seconded. Roll Call vote: Rob Clemens – aye; Vick Bennison – aye; Jared Hardner – aye; Rich Hart – aye; John Harvey – aye; and Lee Gilman – aye. 6-0-0; motion carried unanimously.

9. Other Business

Natasha Kypfer suggested that the ACC could get word out about the Warrant Article by attending other Board/Commission meetings and speaking about it to those present.

Jared Hardner stated that the old King Post bridge in Joe English needs to be removed, now that the new bridge, designed and built by Jeff Mazur, is in place.

Lee Gilman stated that VCS mowed Caesar's Brook yesterday. An herbicide treatment will be dealt with in the spring.

John Harvey explained that he is rescinding his suggestion to pave the canoe port on Boston Post Road with recycled asphalt. George Bower alerted him to the fact that this type of material contains long chain hydrocarbons that can leach into the ground and water.

Rob Clemens asked that Commissioners comment on the proposed Great Meadow poster to be included in the new kiosk. He also explained that the ACC's educational posters are currently hanging in the Library. The group agreed to look into creating brief histories about each property to include in the kiosks.

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221 The next ACC meeting will be on February 10, 2021. The regularly scheduled January 27, 2021,
222 meeting has been cancelled.

223

224 **Vick Bennison moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:03 PM. The meeting was**
225 **adjourned.**

226

227 *Respectfully submitted,*

228 *Kristan Patenaude*

229

230 Minutes approved as amended: February 10, 2021