

TOWN OF AMHERST
Conservation Commission

February 23, 2022

APPROVED

In attendance: Rob Clemens – Chair, John Harvey (remote), Jared Hardner, Rich Hart, Lee Gilman, Bill Widmer, Peter Lyon – BOS Ex-Officio, 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 welcomed Toby Patterson to the meeting. Mr. Patterson has interest in helping with the trail stewards.

2. Minutes: January 12, 2022

Jared Hardner moved to approve the meeting minutes of January 12, 2022, as written. Rob Clemens seconded.

Voting: Rob Clemens – aye, Lee Gilman - abstain, Bill Widmer – abstain, Rich Hart - aye, and Jared Hardner – aye; 3-0-2 motion carried.

3. Treasurer's Report

Bill Widmer explained that the Commission has spent approximately \$6,500 this year. There is approximately \$10,000 left in the budget. He believes approximately \$307,000 is still pending for the Conservation Fund. He is working with the Town Administrator to close any of the outstanding financial pending concerns that the Commission has with the Town.

Rob Clemens noted that the Town recently hired Deb Bender as the new Finance Director. The Commission will continue to work at adjusting its books with the Town's to be final by the end of this fiscal year.

Jared Hardner asked about the amount listed in the budget for the Educational Outreach line. It was noted that the Commission previously believed additional posters, speakers, etc. would be needed throughout the year. Jared Hardner noted that a kiosk and gate are needed at Buck Meadow, and that some funds could be used for this project.

Jared Hardner moved to approve the Treasurer's Report, as presented. Bill Widmer seconded.

Voting: Rob Clemens – aye, Lee Gilman - aye, Bill Widmer – aye, Rich Hart - aye, and Jared Hardner – aye; 5-0-0 motion carried.

4. Planning & Permitting

Bill Stoughton explained that the Planning Board will meet next Wednesday. Topics on the agenda include the Clearview property application and the Hazen property conceptual review. This meeting will be held via Zoom, with Town Hall as a physical location.

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46 **a. CASE #: PZ15394-020822 – Amherst Crossing AMA Realty Ventures, LLC**
47 **(Owner) & Charles River Realty Group (Applicant); 123 Route 101A, PIN #: 002-**
48 **038-000 – Non-Residential Site Plan Application. To propose the addition of a**
49 **drive-up ATM to the existing retail plaza parking area. Zoned Commercial.**

50 Rob Clemens explained that this proposal is to place an ATM along Route 101A, in the
51 Michael's/Petco/etc. parking lot.

52
53 The Commission agreed that it had no comments on this proposal.

54
55 **TOPICS**

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57 **5. Eagle Scout Project Presentation**

58 Jared Hardner explained that this project was previously planned and approved by the
59 Commission. The Scout started work on the project in the fall of 2021. Upon review of the
60 project, Commissioners noted a couple of items that needed to be completed. Since then, the
61 Commission has not heard from the Scout. This may be a project that the Commission needs to
62 complete on its own, at this point. The trail is complete enough that people have been using it,
63 and it can be added to the trail maps. Jared Hardner noted that he believes this Scout turns 18 in
64 March, thus this would be the last meeting he would be able to present the project to the
65 Commission before that time.

66
67 Rob Clemens stated that he recently received the new Eagle Scout guidelines. He will send this
68 document to the group.

69
70 Jared Hardner noted that there are several trail maps in kiosks that need to be updated and
71 reprinted.

72
73 In response to a question from Lee Gilman, it was noted that the QR codes have been removed
74 from many of the kiosks. There was discussion regarding reincluding these in the kiosks.

75
76 Rich Hart suggested a large trail map to post downstairs at Town Hall for public education. He
77 stated that he will continue to look into this.

78
79 **6. Invasives Control Invoices/Projects/Outreach**

80 Rob Clemens explained that VCS previously performed more work than they were authorized
81 for. VCS has since apologized for the miscalculation on their part but is still requesting to be
82 paid.

83
84 Bill Widmer explained that VCS billed for \$17,500, when the Commission only authorized them
85 for \$11,250 from the Conservation Fund. Part of the overage was for work completed at
86 Lindabury Orchard, which was desired but never voted on by the Commission. Another \$2,500
87 worth of work was also completed without authorization.
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Lee Gilman explained that this was a multi-day, multi-manpower job. He believes the work completed was work the Commission wanted to have done, there was simply miscommunication along the way.

Bill Widmer explained that the proposed offer is to pay an additional \$5,000 of the \$6,250 balance to VCS, to split the extra amount billed for but unauthorized. Christian Littlefield agreed with the proposed offer. He noted that the work was completed, but that Commissioners spent a lot of time reviewing this discrepancy.

Rob Clemens moved to expend an additional \$5,000 from the Conservation Fund, of the remaining balance of the invoice to VCS, holding back \$1,250 as it was not authorized. Bill Widmer seconded.

Voting: Rob Clemens – aye, Lee Gilman - aye, Bill Widmer – aye, Rich Hart - aye, and Jared Hardner – aye; 5-0-0 motion carried.

The Commission discussed additional invasive projects ongoing in Town.

7. Town-wide Clean Up Day

Bill Widmer suggested that Clean Up Day be held on April 23, 2022, this year, as it is the day after Earth Day. He will work with Kristan Patenaude on this project. He also plans to contact the Environmental Science Club at Souhegan High School about getting students involved. He suggested some funding in order to engage the effort at the High School.

Bill Widmer moved to expend \$250 from the Gift Account to publicize Clean Up Day and work with Souhegan High School students. Jared Hardner seconded.

Discussion:

Christian Littlefield stated that his daughter is a Junior at the High School. They will work to get contact information to Bill Widmer.

Voting: Rob Clemens – aye, Lee Gilman - aye, Bill Widmer – aye, Rich Hart - aye, and Jared Hardner – aye; 5-0-0 motion carried.

8. Housekeeping Items

John Harvey discussed the current lack of upkeep to the Town's trail parking lots. He noted that it is the Commission's responsibility to make these welcoming, safe areas for the public. For Bragdon Hill, he suggested that the existing sign could be replaced, the existing gate could be strengthened and straightened, and new rails and posts could be inserted. At Caesar's Brook, a hiker and arrow sign are needed on the road, and the lot could be graded to the slope of the road. The Woolsey Gateway needs a hiker and arrow sign on the road, the parking area could be widened, and a kiosk could be installed. The Boston Post Road Canoe Port Landing needs to have the area near the stairs filled and stabilized. The location also needs hiker and arrow signs, and to have some unsafe trees removed. Pulpit Brook also needs hiker and arrow signs on the road, and to have some standardized bridging installed. The Old Mail Road entrance needs to be

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widened, and hiker and arrow signs need to be installed along the road. The southern entrance of Pond Parish needs to be regraded with fill added for the depression in the middle that has formed.

John Harvey suggested that inhouse volunteers be sought to help with these items. He also suggested upgrading the partnership with DPW to deal with routine grading of these lots, along with other items as necessary. This may include the Commission advocating for increases to the DPW's budget, if needed. He also suggested seeking contractors to do some of the work in the parking lots.

Bill Widmer asked if funds could be taken from the Conservation Fund to allow the DPW to do some of this work. Jared Hardner stated that the DPW has always completed work for the Commission when asked. Peter Lyon stated that he believes extra help could be requested from the DPW, without allotting additional funds. Jared Hardner suggested that John Harvey compile a list of the items and send them to Rob Clemens, for discussion with DPW. Jared Hardner stated that he will work with Christian Littlefield and Frank Montesanto to work on some of the other items mentioned.

John Harvey noted that this is just one example of the facility items the Commission should be cognizant of and keeping up with.

9. Other Business

Bill Widmer contacted the Milford Conservation Commission regarding the donation of three Dutch Elm disease-resistant elms that will be placed along or around Main Street. He will donate these to them this spring.

Rich Hart stated that he would like to organize pruning session at Lindabury Orchard, both as a workshop for the public and workdays for Commissioners/volunteers. It was noted that the Garden Club could market the public workshop.

Rich Hart noted that the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee recently created a document regarding public trails on private land. The Conservation Commission is mentioned quite frequently and there is a lot of good information included.

Bill Stoughton noted that the Commission should discuss hunting at Buck Meadow as part of a future agenda. He also stated that this is likely his last meeting as a Commissioner. He thanked the Commission for all of its work.

The Commission thanked Bill Stoughton for his work on the Commission.

Christian Littlefield asked how the Commission tracks what is being done/has been done/needs to be done on its properties. Rob Clemens stated that a system needs to be created for this. It was noted that many Commissions have part-time/full-time assistance for their administrative needs.

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177 Peter Lyon stated that the Town has hired a new Town Planner, Nicole Stevens. She will begin
178 work on March 28, 2022.

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180 Rob Clemens stated that he received correspondence today complimenting the Town's blazing
181 and signage on its trails.

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183 **Jared Hardner moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:30pm. Bill Widmer seconded.**
184 **Voting: Rob Clemens – aye, Lee Gilman - aye, Bill Widmer – aye, Rich Hart - aye,**
185 **and Jared Hardner – aye; 5-0-0 motion carried.**

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187 **The meeting was adjourned.**

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189
190 *Respectfully submitted,*
191 *Kristan Patenaude*

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193 Minutes approved: March 9, 2022