

TOWN OF AMHERST
Conservation Commission

March 9, 2022

APPROVED

In attendance: Rob Clemens – Chair, John Harvey (remote), Frank Montesanto, Jared Hardner, Rich Hart [7:15pm] (remote), Bill Widmer, Peter Lyon – BOS Ex-Officio, 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 congratulated Peter Lyon and Bill Stoughton for their elections to the Board of Selectmen. He thanked Bill Stoughton for his work on the Commission.

2. Minutes: February 23, 2022

Christian Littlefield sat for Lee Gilman

Rob Clemens moved to approve the meeting minutes of February 23, 2022, as amended [Line 85: Change “\$11,500” to “\$11,250”]. Bill Widmer seconded. Voting: Bill Widmer – aye; Rob Clemens – aye; Jared Hardner – aye; Christian Littlefield – aye; and Frank Montesanto – aye; 5-0-0 motion carried unanimously.

3. Treasurer’s Report

Bill Widmer explained that there have not been many changes or charges to the Commission’s account from the last meeting. There is a \$23,000 increase to the Conservation Fund pending, due to LUCT payments. It was noted that there will be a meeting with the new Finance Director shortly to work out some accounting balance concerns for the Commission.

Jared Hardner moved to approve the Treasurer’s Report, as amended. Frank Montesanto seconded. Voting: Bill Widmer – aye; Rob Clemens – aye; Jared Hardner – aye; Christian Littlefield – aye; and Frank Montesanto – aye; 5-0-0 motion carried unanimously.

4. Planning & Permitting

Rob Clemens noted that a Commissioner is needed to act as a liaison with the Planning Board. He also noted that there will be a presentation next month to the Commission regarding a proposal for Bon Terrain.

TOPICS

5. Invasives Control Projects

This item was tabled until Lee Gilman was available.

6. Pond Parish Forestry Project Update

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Jared Hardner explained that the Forestry Plan includes work in Pond Parish off Lynch Farm Road. A shelterwood cut will be made, removing more trees per unit area than normal in order to get more oak regeneration than usually seen. The hope is to stay ahead of the deer. The neighbors of the area have been spoken to regarding this project. There is a contract for the project, with Charlie Koch as the agent. Mr. Koch is in charge of determining which trees will be cut. He then hires the appropriate logger for the situation to follow best management practices. The trees removed will be brought to market by Mr. Koch. The proceeds will be used to pay the contract with the logger and Mr. Koch. Any additional proceeds will be placed into the Commission's account. The goal is not to make a profit, but to reach a certain management goal. The intention is to create a zone of young forest, which will be beneficial for different wildlife species.

Rob Clemens stated that this project may also help to remove some of the existing trash on the property.

In response to a question from Bill Widmer regarding this being a rough cut, Jared Hardner explained that the intention is to create logs and branches in the area. Creating a rough surface allows for habitat for certain wildlife species that do not fare as well in mature forests. This also allows for biomass to be left in the system to degrade slowly. In the past, large patch cuts were being made around Town, leading to poor regeneration. The shelterwood system seems to work better in New Hampshire and was included in the Town's Forest Management Plan. Another cut is planned in Joe English and results of the two will be analyzed to create an adaptive plan.

Bill Widmer suggested that beech trees not be removed from the site, if possible. Jared Hardner explained that oak is a better choice for wildlife than beech. However, nothing will be done to prevent beech from regrowing into this young forest.

Rich Hart noted that deer like to eat new young tree shoots. He asked if deer select certain species. Jared Hardner explained that deer love oak. Oaks get clipped by the deer and then shaded out by other species. Rich Hart suggested placing a protective barrier over certain trees to preserve them as they grow. Jared Hardner stated that this is a very labor intensive and possibly expensive process.

John Harvey explained that he believes the proposal will be very beneficial for this area. He noted that rough cuts help to promote biodiversity.

Rob Clemens explained that the loggers are ready to begin as soon as the contract is signed.

Jared Hardner moved to sign the contracts with the forester and logger to proceed with the timber harvest cut at the Wheeler and adjoining property. Frank Montesanto seconded.

Voting: Bill Widmer – aye; Rob Clemens – aye; Jared Hardner – aye; Christian Littlefield – aye; and Frank Montesanto – aye; 5-0-0 motion carried unanimously.

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7. Buck Meadow Hunting

Rob Clemens explained that there was a request last fall from a local hunter to place a deer stand at Buck Meadow. This was approved by the Commission at that time. Since then, there has been concern from the Recreation Commission and others regarding hunting adjacent to a recreation area. The recommendation is to post Buck Meadow as No Hunting allowed. The abutting, Currier property, would likely also have to be posted.

Jared Hardner asked how likely hunting is on the property, due to the large amount of wet area. He explained that there might not need to be many signs posted. Signs could be posted at the two entrance points to the property.

Peter Lyon stated that, if the area is not going to be allowed for hunting, it should likely be posted. If it is prohibited, it should likely be so across the whole property.

Rob Clemens noted that the Commission has received two requests for hunting at Buck Meadow thus far.

Christian Littlefield suggested that the recreation fields only be posted for No Hunting. Rob Clemens noted that access to the site is limited and would mostly come through the recreation fields.

The Commission agreed to post No Hunting signs only at the two entrance points to begin with, Route 101A and Stearns Road. If additional signage is needed in the future, it will be discussed at that time.

Bill Widmer moved to expend up to \$200 from the Signage account to post two No Hunting signs at Buck Meadow. Jared Hardner seconded.

Voting: Bill Widmer – aye; Rob Clemens – aye; Jared Hardner – aye; Christian Littlefield – aye; and Frank Montesanto – aye; 5-0-0 motion carried unanimously.

8. Other Business

Bill Widmer explained that he has been discussing interest in Clean Up Day with the Environmental Club at Souhegan High School. Clean Up Day is planned for April 23, 2022. He is working with Eric Slosek, DPW Director, regarding signage and dumpsters for the event. There is only one electronic sign available in Town currently. He suggested expending \$300 to rent an additional electronic sign to advertise for Clean Up Day for one week prior to the event. He also suggested expending \$100 to work with Kristan Patenaude on additional promotional materials.

Bill Widmer moved to expend up to \$400 from the Educational Outreach account for Clean Up Day. Jared Hardner seconded.

Voting: Bill Widmer – aye; Rob Clemens – aye; Jared Hardner – aye; Christian Littlefield – aye; and Frank Montesanto – aye; 5-0-0 motion carried unanimously.

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Bill Widmer discussed signage at Bragdon Farm. He will have updates for the Commission at its next meeting.

Rich Hart stated that he plans to publish weekend Lindabury Orchard cleanup and workshop dates/times in March and April. Groups will work to prune the orchard and run some educational talks during this.

Christian Littlefield stated that he and Rob Clemens met with Eric Slosek regarding updates to the trail parking lots and improvements to trail signage along the roads, as discussed at the Commission's last meeting. Christian Littlefield suggested that the parking lots be prioritized for DPW to work on. The DPW also stated that signage can be added to their Town order. There will need to be additional discussions regarding mowing at Lindabury Orchard.

The Commission will meet again on March 23, 2022.

Will Ludt stated that he was nominated by the Board of Selectmen to be one of the NRPC Commissioners for the Town. He stated that he is happy to bring items of interest forward to the NRPC from the Commission.

Rob Clemens moved to enter Non-Public Session, pursuant to NH RSA 91-A:3 II (1) to review potential property acquisitions at 8:10pm. Bill Widmer seconded. Voting: John Harvey – aye; Bill Widmer – aye; Rob Clemens – aye; Jared Hardner – aye; Christian Littlefield – aye; Frank Montesanto – aye; and Rich Hart – aye; 7-0-0 motion carried unanimously.

**9. Non- Public Session (pursuant to NH RSA 91-A:3 II (1))
- Review of potential property acquisitions.**

Bill Widmer moved to exit Non-Public Session at 8:37pm. Jared Hardner seconded. Voting: John Harvey – aye; Bill Widmer – aye; Rob Clemens – aye; Jared Hardner – aye; Christian Littlefield – aye; Frank Montesanto – aye; and Rich Hart – aye; 7-0-0 motion carried unanimously.

No actions were taken, no motions were made during Non-Public Session.

Jared Hardner moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:38pm. Bill Widmer seconded. Voting: 5-0-0 motion carried unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned.

*Respectfully submitted,
Kristan Patenaude*

Minutes approved: March 23, 2022