

**ACC December 10, 2014 - Minutes**  
**Approved**

**Meeting called to order by Chair John Harvey 7:07**

**Attendance:** John Harvey, Bill Wichman, Rich Hart, Jack Gleason, Bruce Beckley, Alternates: Lee Gilman, Paul Indeglia, Guests: Chris Wells (PLC), Brian Hotz (NHSPF), Sara Siskavich of NRPC, Sally Wilkins of APB

**Chairman's Comments**

1. Tonight's topics were the result of change meetings with conservation professionals. The initiative of topics and inclusion of guests at ACC meetings is intended to continue. A future meeting will be held in February as a joint-session with the Merrimack Conservation Commission to discuss the Grater Woods complex. January topics include Wilkins trails (Long Trails), March will include Grasshopper Sparrow habitat and Souhegan River plans. Future possibilities are ADA trails program, and Piscataquog Land Conservancy (PLC) partnership.
2. There is a laptop projector and wi-fi in the Selectmen's Chamber, which should be utilized for topics brought to the table. Bulleted points, maps, and photos provide much higher impact and better understanding.
3. The Bazil land swap has been postponed to a future meeting when all factors are known.
4. Archival minutes 2007-2010 are being prepped for the Town website, if they are needed to be researched.

**Minutes** – approved as sent (6-0)

**Treasurer – Bill**

Land Dec. – \$335,291.16 (Nov. - \$335,283.99)

Budget – unavailable at time of meeting; provided post-meeting: \$2,352.34 (expires 6/30/15)

Gift – unavailable at time of meeting; provided post-meeting: \$12,045.83

**Land Budget** – approved (6-0)

**Planning Board – Rich**

1. The last meeting was 12/3/14
2. Two items were lot line adjustments:
  - a. Charlynn L. Johnson on Schoolhouse Road – to preserve open space
  - b. Stuart and Susan Steele on Christian Hill Road
3. At the BOS meeting, there was a request of the Planning Board to re-examine the decision on housing development on Merrimack Road. At issue was whether to consider the actual size of the lot or just the usable, uplands portion to assess allowance for number of units. BOS said "actual size" in a 3-1-1 vote to ask the Zoning Board of Adjustment to re-examine the issue on 12/16/14 meeting and then to re-discuss the issue in January 2015.

**Plans and Permits – (Jim not present)**

There was no discussion on plans and permits.

## **Meadows - Jack**

Jack asked that the discussion on meadows be deferred until later in the meeting when he and Lee will discuss the Meadows and Invasives Budget.

## **Topics**

### **Merrimack River Watershed Conservation Focus Areas (CFAs) Presentation**

Chris Wells, Executive Director of the PLC, and Brian Hotz, Vice President of the NHSPF, presented. The PowerPoint presentation will be included on the ACC website for review.

Q&A session:

- John – Can the Amherst data be emailed to the ACC? Yes
- Rich – Were Merrimack (Upper and Lower) and Souhegan Local Advisory Committees involved? Yes
- John – To what extent is Forest Society using this data? Extensively.
- Sara Siskavich – How is this data integrated with GRANIT? The group tries to integrate and derive this data with the GRANIT database but GRANIT relies heavily on self-reporting and the State has reduced the budget so no new updates. However, a coalition of land trusts are trying to find funding to renew GRANIT updating efforts.

Sara Siskavich, GIS Manager for Nashua Regional Planning Commission (NRPC), presented on Valuing Amherst Tax Map Parcels.

- Sara has integrated the information from the CFAs and Amherst Tax Map parcel information.
- Sara noted that there are 13 communities in NRPC area and 10 have no GIS capacity and NRPC acts as GIS manager for those without GIS.
- There is an interactive parcel viewer in GIS.
- Analysis of Amherst's undeveloped and open space parcels layers with CFA layers to create a GIS intersection for review and inspection of individual parcels that could be targeted for conservation or other considerations. NRPC cross-references and validates the information. (Note: NRPC took the “highest” value for parcels with multiple grading criteria and applied it to the entire parcel.)
- There is an Excel spreadsheet that values each parcel that has been provided to ACC.

Q&A session:

- Sally – Do conservation easements show up on map? They should if they are in GRANIT but otherwise, it is unknown.
- Bruce – It will still take a willing seller and an able buyer and presently, ACC is not in a position to buy.

## **J. Hager Gift**

BOS held public hearing on 12/8/14 to see if the gift should be accepted. During the 12/8/14 ACC special session, ACC approved \$5,000 to facilitate closing.

Concerns of the Abutters:

- Might cause increase in hunting intrusions and parking problems;
- Trail corridors would create a problem with security, specifically at the Flume; and
- Not notified of hearing.

BOS decided to postpone a decision until 12/15/14 meeting.

Colleen Mailloux, Community Development Director, posted files for public review on 12/9/14.

Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) permit, which is part of the legal record, indicated specific uses and that the trails would go right behind properties within the Flume. Bruce's review showed that there is an expiration date for the ACOE permit but Colleen said it goes with the property so it is still in effect.

John will put together a list of things for the BOS that ACC does to benefit the Town and its residents including accept donations of land.

### **Meadows and Invasives Budget – Jack and Lee**

Jack's summary of meadows activities since 2009, when he joined ACC:

- Prior to 2009 some fields were maintained by brush hogging and others had crops removed with no augmentation of nutrients.
- Jack ran soil tests and found that pH was low and potassium (K) was very low.
- Invasives management (i.e. Upper Bragdon was invaded with Bittersweet, multiflora rose and autumn olive; significant problems with stones, which damaged Brush Hog equipment).
- Recognizing the ecological value of meadows, it was decided to revitalize.

Current management activities:

- Scott Property (on Souhegan): Kevin Pomeroy accepted the management of these two parcels for crops. He received \$1,500 for two years to augment the soil due to the low soil test values present at the time. He was already farming the Bertha Roger's fields with alfalfa hay.
- North and South Bragdon – these parcels received similar soil augmentation. Both fields continue to be hayed. It was estimated that brush hogging of these two fields would cost about \$1500 per year. Due to the aesthetics of these two fields at the entrance to town and knowing that brush hogging would not have the same aesthetic values as crop removal and recognizing the hay crop was in decline due to the nutrient levels, it was decided to spend up to \$1500 per year for a few years to establish appropriate nutrient levels and save the fields.
- ACC famers now continue to augment the soils (i.e. add wood ash, lime, and fertilizers)
- No soil augmentation at North or South Bragdon this year because both pH and K are at satisfactory levels.

Last year, ACC approved \$750 to remove stones and "islands" that serve as havens for invasives on upper Bragdon. Mike Riccitelli wants to focus on the removal of the remaining stones due to damage hazards to his equipment. Significant reclamation of these fields has already been completed.

Extensive restoration work has been done on the two Joppa Farm meadows to re-establish them as open fields. Successional forest regrowth was removed, margins cleaned and invasive control measures have been instituted.

*Budget Items:*

- urea (needs to be applied in spring right before it rains otherwise it will volatilize, but it was not done this past spring on Bragdon), potassium augmentation.
- invasive plant control
- lime and wood ash application on cropped fields, as needed.
- stone removal in some areas of upper Bragdon
- Kevin Pomeroy is managing the Scott and Bertha Rogers meadows so O&M costs are “minimal”

North and South Bragdon

- Do not produce a good hay crop and the cost to replant at this time is prohibitive.
- Steve Blaise has been haying them and contributing financially to augment them by paying \$750 annually in fertilizer costs.

Tractor drivers do not want to enter the 101 right-of-way at Bragdon due to the highway dangers making it difficult to get farmers to farm them. Therefore, Steve Blaise is being treated accordingly to ensure his willingness to continue to maintain Bragdon.

- Jack requests that the ACC support a \$750 annual expenditure for fertilization effort at North and South Bragdon.

ACC Meadows Expenditures spreadsheet was provided; spreadsheet is included as an attachment to these minutes.

*Notes on Expenditures*

Major Expenses:

- Brush hogging (Mike Riccitelli's fees have been consistent)
- Invasives control (especially at North and South Bragdon and Joppa)
- Joppa Farm: Two major, secluded fields that provided good habitat. Had significant successional invasion of white pines and juniper, especially at the south field.
- There was considerable cost in removal of the trees. The restoration monies received by the Fish and Game Grant defrayed these costs.
- ACC Meadows Expenditures spreadsheet does not reflect \$6,000 from State. ACC received \$2,000 annually for 3 years (\$6,000 total) from Fish and Wildlife to reclaim Joppa fields and improve other meadow areas.

Bruce requested that acreages be added to the spreadsheet.

Bruce indicated that the Grater Woods Lot #3 needs to be added as a meadow; it is currently being mowed for the ACC for free.

Jack suggested continuing soil testing of all meadows (each tests is \$12.00 through UNH Ag. Extension).

Rich requested that maintenance of trees at Lindabury be indicated.

There is a lot of volunteer activity so the job of maintenance never is fully completed. Bill inquired if it is

an aesthetic issue or for agricultural purposes.

Rich indicated both are important, but the apple harvest was better this year due to pruning.

Jack indicated it is very difficult to cultivate apples unless spraying occurs early and often (every 10-14 days) as there are many different types of pests throughout the year that will devastate apple crops.

Jack indicated that Kevin Pomeroy would be willing to crop the field, but the lower trees make it prohibitive.

There is a considerable issue with invasives, especially poison ivy.

Lee indicated that the spreadsheet is a summary and any and all items can be included as the supporting information rolls up into the summary provided.

Jack indicated George Hamilton, Co-op Extension Officer in Goffstown, could potentially come out to train how to prune apple trees.

John requested that future meadow presentation be put together into slides to project for the Commission. It is noted that the projector has a VGA connection but John has purchased an HDMI adapter for the use by ACC.

Jack indicated there are two problems on Joppa South Field that have to be addressed:

- Some tree stumps remain in Joppa south and should be removed. Decay will make this process much easier.
- Bittersweet is 4'+ causes a problem with mowing as they hide the remaining stumps. Mike Riccitelli wants the stumps remove because of damage to the equipment.

Options:

- Stump in 2015 at \$75 per hour with a backhoe
- Remove Bittersweet and then stump in 2016; Jeff Taylor could provide a bid to use boom sprayer on 1.0 to 1.5 acres to handle Bittersweet removal

Bruce indicated there are lots of vines up to 60' high on "old road".

Lee indicated that backpack sprayers could be used to implement "basal" spraying.

Jack indicated the ACC already approved \$650 annually for invasive management but it actually costs \$1,200 annually to effectuate eradication so it never gets done completely. Bruce indicated that eradication best be done with funds from the Land Trust to make sure it is completed properly. Bill indicated that there has never been a problem with using Conservation Fund moneys for such work. John suggested that ACC utilize the necessary funds to complete the work. Lee suggested follow up in 2016 with spraying to pick up seeds and re-growth and to do it along the road as well.

John noted that the annual cost decreased from \$8,000 in 2009 to \$6,000 for 2015 (proposed). Therefore, he suggested that the ACC authorize \$7,000 (not to exceed) annually for Meadow Management and if there is additional need, then authorize it as such.

**Motion – Jack, that the Meadow Management Budget be allocated at not-more-than \$7,000 annually.**

**Second – Bruce**

**Motion passed (7-0)**

### **Round Table**

**Rich** – spoke to librarian regarding an ACC display focusing on management activities. He is looking for pictures, hiking signs, maps, natural items, description of activities etc. to put in display case with a late-winter or early spring kick-off.

**Jack** – regarding the Class 6 road at Joppa, there is a beehive on the trunk of the first huge white pine with six sheets of wax. They typically utilize hollow trees. One wax sheet fell. The hive is abandoned and suspected that by being in the open and unprotected, it was attacked by robber bees. There is no honey. Regarding the parking at Horace Greeley, there is a problem with windows of cars being smashed, as there is lots of broken glass in the parking area. There has been a similar problem at Ponemah Bog. Jack received a commercially prepared, obscene message from someone on his car window while parked doing maintenance. John indicated that this is no longer a Class 6 road as the Town voted to change it to a Class B trail; the Bedford side is still a Class 6 road. John is trying to find a better parking condition. Jack has twice manually cleaned out the beaver deceiver at Joppa. The cause of the failure of the deceiver has been found and rectified.

**John** – the Feb. meeting will be joint with Merrimack Conservation Commission; there was discussion regarding the location of the Jan. meeting due to a possible conflict with the BOS but he will follow up later on the precise locale.

**Paul** – viewed a blue dump truck with the word “FIREWOOD” stenciled on the side and rear exiting the parking lot for Pond Parish on Spring Road. Noted that there is an effort to resurrect the Stormwater Committee to prepare for new EPA regulations and indicated he was asked and agreed to serve on the committee. In the light of the earlier presentations, noted that there needs to be an effort to address source water contamination and that funds are available through DES for activities related to such. Indicated that the owner of the Carlson land (32 acres) on 122 has passed away and the future use and availability of the land, a former chicken farm and currently used for an antique car show, is unknown. Indicated he was bitten by a Lone Star tick and has developed an allergy to red meat as a result, cautioning other ACC members to take care when hiking.

**Bruce** – indicated Grater Wood is pretty heavily hunted. He has flagged white and blue trails from Curran to lower section for ACC to explore and that the trails are clear.

No other business.

Meeting Adjourned at 9:38 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Paul Indeglia, Acting secretary