

Amherst Conservation Commission Minutes

March 9, 2014 - Town Hall

Meeting called to order at 7:03 PM by John Harvey

Attendance: John Harvey, Bill Wichman, Rich Hart, Jack Gleason, Anne Krantz,
Alternates Bruce Beckley, Lee Gilman, Rob Clemens,
Guests - Will Ludt, AHC, Chris Buchannan 673-7519, and others

Minutes - approved as sent

Treasurer – Bill

Land - \$229,991.93 (expecting a check for about \$30,000 current use)

Other ACC account totals not available Approved

Planning Board – Rich passed around a letter he wrote to the paper citing a misleading headline: “Amherst Zoning should Not Pass” that seemed to imply that all ACC Zoning warrants should not be approved. It was not printed but he is sending it out to electronic media.

- The Lindabury Orchard pruning class is scheduled for April 6 from 1-4 for a cost of \$5.00.
- The PB approved the Wal-Mart new septic treatment plant plans
- The Merrimack Rd housing project will be coming before the Board again for continued approvals

Meadow Management – Jack has consulted with Extension Field Specialist George Hamilton regarding management of the Scott Land and Bragdon hay fields

- Scott land cropped by Kevin Pomoroy in corn. (because it is next to the Souhegan River NRCS also monitors). It is a unique field because it has no stones and no erosion problems since it is so flat. Jack would like to see crop rotation to alfalfa, a legume that would improve the soil. It is higher in protein and valuable feed, but requires more cuttings. He will discuss with Kevin.
- Bragdon north and south - George is very pleased with the progress made in improving the hay fields. Upper does not need any more ash or lime as the pH is 7.2 and the potassium level has improved. Bragdon south is OK too – maybe some urea. ? He noted that is very cost effective to keep the fields in production rather than let them deteriorate to simply brush hogging.

TOPICS

Heritage Sites – Will Ludt, AHC, spoke about an ACC – AHC Joint Venture to preserve Heritage Sites in Amherst, beginning with abandoned stone structures such as the cellar hole at the new Grater Rd property and the wonderful stone foundations at Peabody Mill. To this end he has gathered much info about available resources and specific data about Amherst. He visited with NHDHR and learned that they are willing to come to Amherst to provide hands-on and onsite training. He suggested a subcommittee from both Commissions to meet in early April to make the arrangements for this event: Bill, Bruce, John, Anne & Lee volunteered to join with AHC Thanks to Mr. Ludt for taking the initiative to organize this excellent idea

Regarding other collaborative projects Rob expressed interest in creating a trail to connect the corn crib to the Fells and Pond Parish via the easement land that is under ACC management. Lee mentioned that he plans to apply for a pesticide permit to treat the poison ivy and bittersweet and other invasives along the stone wall in front of the crib – to be applied in the fall

when he does his annual complimentary invasives roadside treatments. This will greatly facilitate access to the site as the grounds and wall are covered with poison ivy.

Trailhead Improvements – John passed around examples of roadside trailhead marker signs – the standard hiker signs. He wants to order 22 (a sign facing each direction) from the NH Prison Sign Shop for DPW to install. Rich reminded that there is an Amherst sign ordinance and that John should talk to Sarah - will do. Anne moved to allocate not more than \$1,000 for 22 highway hiker signs, 2nd. Discussion – agreed that don't need an ACC logo on these signs. Approved

Sledding on Bragdon Hill – because of extreme dangerous icy conditions, the hill had **to be** closed last week by the police. This raised the question of whether ACC should continue to manage the sledding hill as it is a more active type of recreation requiring more monitoring than a volunteer group can provide. Bruce moved that ACC request that the BOS assign to the Town Recreation Dept management of winter activities at Bragdon sledding hill since sledding is an active use of the land as opposed to the passive recreation activities like hiking that ACC customarily manages. 2nd by Bill
Discussion - The monitoring required to decide quickly when to close for safety reasons could be better handled by the Rec Dept that has staff. They could also maintain the tunnel that gets icy at the far end and monitor the ramps and jumps that the kids build at on the hill that turn to ice and can be dangerous. Rob mentioned that Roby Park in Nashua is maintained by the Nashua Rec Dept. Approved unanimously Lee asked about the snow expected mid-week: will the closed sign be removed if good snow?

Sugaring on ACC Property

John received a call from a resident at the Fells to tap maple trees on the Fells common land that has a management easement to ACC. Discussion – all were Ok with the idea as long as best management guidelines are followed. Bill will research such a document.

Election Day, Tues., March 11 – ACC booth allowed only OUTSIDE

Will pass out ACC Walk Book this one time only and continue to sell them at Town Hall
Rob, John, Rich, and Anne will work out a schedule to man the booth. Rob will bring the new Habitat maps to generate interest in the ACC Wildlife Habitat Project.

Will Ludt asked if the ACC wants to co-sponsor the GIS Workshop Wed April 26th at the Brick School presented by NRPC – YES!

Round Table

Lee asked about his role in monitoring the Caesar's Brook timber harvest – he reported that so far it looks neat and tidy. Are there final specs? - brush no higher than 3 feet. Trail conversion was discussed and the overwhelming jungle of invasive plants at the landing. The access needs leveling - DPW did spread some gravel least year.

Rob – Wildlife Habitat Initiative – showed the maps that he had mounted and laminated that are very nice. He submitted an article to the Community Development newsletter (see addendum). He is planning the next meeting with the Extension advisors in April.

Rich moved that ACC expend \$100 to help pay for the orchard maintenance workshop – 2nd and approved

Bruce – noted that the Hooksett CC has received some nice grants for acquiring land along the Merrimack River – are we missing opportunities in the grant world?

Bruce also had a question about the accounting pages in the new Town Report on pg 233
'Open space land' Dwight will find out what this is.

No other business

Meeting adjourned at 8:50

Respectfully submitted,
Anne Krantz, secretary

Community Development Newsletter: - Feb 26, 2014

Did You Know? Wildlife Habitat Plan Underdevelopment

The Amherst Conservation Commission (ACC) has begun developing a wildlife habitat management plan in an effort to better incorporate wildlife habitat into its ongoing land and water conservation activities. While wildlife has always been an interest and consideration in the Commission's forest and meadow management programs, its land acquisition and trail development efforts, and its wetland protection responsibilities, a specific focus on inventorying and conserving the wildlife habitats present in Amherst has been lacking.

To aid this effort, the Commission applied for technical assistance from the "Taking Action for Wildlife" program, a joint effort of the NH Fish & Game Department and the UNH Cooperative Extension. The Commission was specifically interested in inventorying the habitats and species existing in the Town. The Cooperative Extension accepted the Commission's application in January and has started this initiative by providing Amherst with maps depicting wildlife habitat land cover specific to the Town, and a ranking of these habitats by ecological condition. These maps are derived from the New Hampshire Wildlife Action Plan and are just two of a multitude of wildlife planning tools developed by the State. Not surprisingly the wildlife habitats present in the Joe English conservation lands are among the Town's highest ranked areas, but so are the unique habitats lying along the Souhegan River valley corridor crossing the Town's southern border. This wildlife habitat planning process when completed will provide the ACC and the Town a more quantitative means to understand the habitats that presently exist within the Town's limits and to more intelligently conserve Amherst's open space for the future.