

**Town of Amherst
Conservation Commission Meeting
Wednesday August 10, 2016**

Chair D'Angelo called the meeting to order at 7:03pm.

Attendance: D. D'Angelo- Chair, J. Harvey, R. Clemens, R. Hart, L. Gilman, V. Bennison, W. Robertson, B. Beckley- Alt, J. Hardner-Alt, F. Montesanto-Alt; P. Lyon, BOS Representative

- Topic- Meetings - Frequency and Day – Daryl

Daryl explained that Tom Carr from Meridian is here to make a presentation, but he is not on the agenda and the board doesn't have copies of his plans or documents so we can't hear him tonight. She said the ACC meetings are running long and she asked if the board could meet two times a month and if there is meeting space availability on other Wednesdays. She suggested Sunday night for the site-walks/ working sessions/ easement discussions and keep the Wednesday meetings for regular topics.

Other suggestions:

- Form committees to delegate
- Use the fire house space

Wes moved to temporarily resume additional meetings on the fourth Sunday of the month at 7pm at the Town Hall unless another space needs to be found. John seconded. Vote: all in favor.

Tom Carr's case will be heard on August 28th.

- Topic – Town Policies: Purchasing / Right To Know. Guest - Town Administrator Jim O'Mara
Information on the NH Right-to-Know law was handed out. This board is appointed by the BOS and needs to follow these rules. It's intended to keep transparency.
 - Open meetings need to be posted 24 hours in advance excluding weekends/ holidays. The agenda only needs to include the time and place. The law requires the minutes to include who was there, the gist of the discussion and any motions or actions taken. Draft minutes need to be available to the public five working days from the meeting. Draft minutes should be posted. At the board's next meeting, suggestions can be made for changes. At that meeting vote to accept the revised minutes.
 - Communication outside of meeting: a chance meeting is acceptable. (example: a holiday party)
 - Alternates may vote during a meeting if elevated by the Chair when a full member is absent.
 - No one on the board should "reply all" to emails. Also: do not have discussions outside of the meetings about cases that may influence anyone's opinions about the cases.
 - Non-public sessions are for Acquisition of Land discussions. These minutes don't need to be as descript. Votes are by roll call vote to enter and to vote within the session. The minutes can be sealed- but that must be done after the board is back in open session. Include a date to revisit those minutes for possible release.

Non-Public session procedures: enter under the RSA with a roll call vote, leave the room or ask the public to leave. When returned to open session, the Chair says, if applicable, "No motions occurred or votes were taken while in non-public session."

Jim doesn't recommend taking any motions or votes in non-public session unless necessary. He recommends doing the motions and votes in open session when it resumes.

Purchasing: Conservation Commission has three accounts: land acquisition account, gift account, Town budget. Only this Commission can touch the first two of those accounts. Give the treasurer an invoice when funds are needed.

It's best to follow the Town's policies regarding budget.

The board discussed bids. Jim recommended that if you're operating with donations, it's best to document that you are getting the best bang for your buck.

Wes asked about Right-to-Know regarding subcommittees if they are formed. Jim said Right-to-Know does apply to subcommittees. They need to post meetings and keep minutes if they include a quorum of the ACC. If there isn't a quorum, notes should be taken to be shared with the ACC at a meeting.

Before he left, Jim mentioned that a development is going in at the Bedford town line. Conservation land is an abutter. The ACC can appear at their meeting to speak as an abutter if desired. Jim will leave the paperwork for the commission to review.

Topic- Explanation of ACC Contracts / Agreements / Memoranda of Understanding – John Harvey

Based on what Jim just said, money used for individual projects needs to be discussed and voted on in a regular ACC meeting even though the money is already within the ACC budget. If you are a project lead, you will need to plan ahead to get approval at an ACC meeting for any money needed.

For the long standing work done by farmers in meadows involving leased land John plans to work up contracts that will be brought before the BOS for approval. For the once a year mowing jobs etc.:

- For under \$1000, it can be an informal bidding process and approved by the ACC
- \$1000-\$5000 requires informal bids and approval by Jim
- Over \$5000 requires a formal bidding process and approval by the BOS

John will write these procedures up into something formal.

Peter explained the BOS process for approving budget items by using a manifest which includes all individual line items but are approved as a whole.

- ACC Policies / Procedures – Daryl

Daryl stated that this item will start showing up on the agenda regularly

- Non-Public Session - RSA 91-A:3, II(d)

At 8:07pm, R. Hart moved to enter into non-public session under RSA 91-A:3, II(d) for the purpose of discussing land acquisition.

Roll call vote: Bruce- yes, Wes- yes, John- yes, Victor- yes, Daryl- yes, Rich- yes, Lee- yes, Rob- yes

The conservation commission returned to open session at 9:04pm.

The Chair stated that while in non-public session, the ACC did not make any motions or take any votes. **John moved to seal the non-public minutes for three months. Rob seconded. Vote: all in favor.**

The Chair stated that while in non-public session, the ACC discussed an easement on the Bragdon Farm land on Rt. 101. Amy LaBelle had previously approached the chair to discuss the conservation commission receiving a donation of land for an easement.

Administrative Reports

Chair's Comments – Daryl

She stated it's a busy month- a lot going on.

Minutes – Anne

Anne was not here.

Rob moved and John seconded the minutes of July 13th be approved. Vote: all in favor

Treasurer's Report – John

See attached document.

Wes explained that he purchased walk books for all the summer campers.

Wes moved that the ACC donate the books to the participants of the summer campers program therefore reimbursing him.

Discussion: Wes paid for them. Many were left on the bus by the campers so the commission will get those back. They are being sold in the town hall and at Toadstool. Rob said years ago the commission decided to give them away because they are out of date. They hand them out at the town booth at various events.

Rob moved to reimburse Wes \$150.00 from the gift account. Lee seconded. Vote all in favor

Planning Board Update – Rich

Just one item on the last agenda- Pond Parish Rd repaving scenic road discussion. Final decision was that instead of making the margins so wide on the side of the road, they will be 30" which will save some trees. There are no real town rules as to what defines a scenic road and how they should be maintained. LaBelle goes before the ZBA next week and then it would go before the Planning Board.

Plans & Permits

None

Meadow Management – Lee

Lee said what's left for financing is what we have been mowing and a suggestion to mow Caesar's Brook. There are some invasive species growing up there. Instead of brush hog, we should kill them so they won't resurge. We can't both mow and spray this fall. He suggested some pest management for that area rather than brush hog.

He listed specific fields that he would like to mow and how much money he requested for each. The total budget for fall mowing that's not contracted would be \$3,120.00

John moved to accept Lee's budgeted amount of up to \$3,500 for fall mowing. Wes seconded.

Discussion

Is it in the budget? Yes.

Vote: all in favor

Topics

- Agreements and Easements - Daryl *

Daryl looked into some deeds and records. She found unexpected items such as right of ways. She would like to form a subcommittee to go through the deeds and easements and pull the language into files. No one is monitoring the easements. We should go out once a year to protect them. Wes said we need to create the index. Daryl will be on the committee. She will find others for assistance.

- Infrastructure Needs / Resource Management - Daryl, Frank *

Daryl said a lot of new people are stepping up and filling needs for the ACC. Frank is on board for infrastructure. How can we help him prioritize and utilize resources so he is not drowned in work with no policies to guide him?

Frank said we need definitions. What does being the infrastructure guy mean? There are a lot of projects to organize and he is a volunteer and has a job outside of this. Prioritizing needs to occur.

Rob suggested infrastructure is dealt with as an administrative report that is discussed at the meetings and decisions on priority are made at the meetings. Frank agreed with that suggestion.

Infrastructure Management will be added to the meeting once a month. If members have projects in the works or ideas of projects that need infrastructure assistance, send it and the supplies needed to Frank.

Rich said there are often short term volunteers that come at certain times such as the fall so that should be worked in with the order of priority and budget and supplies.

- Conservation and Property Management Plans - All *

Should we put together a subcommittee? John said we feel that there is a strong need for a consistent set of plans that starts with the town Masterplan and then includes a conservation overview of objectives which will lead to our forest management plan and infrastructure management plan etc.

Jared agreed there is a need. The NHACC handbook is well written and explains what we are supposed to do but there is a piece missing that bridges the gap. He would be happy to work on that -to explain why we do what we do and provide the pathways to the various management plans. Hopefully that will facilitate discussions we have here in terms of prioritization and what we want to get done in the future. The two things it would be beneficial to have is to capture knowledge from people that have historical local knowledge. The other is that the NRI needs to present information to help us answer questions about what we're doing to manage our lands and influence conservation in town. John, Wes and Lee are willing to help. Jarod will figure out what the next steps are in the process.

Bruce left the meeting at this time.

- OHRVs accessing Merrimack Grater Woods via Amherst - Wes ***

Wes said Merrimack has put some gates up to control access. He showed photos of why Amherst needs to control access from these vehicles. The trails are washed out. He explained three spots that would work for control points by closing up two rock walls to smaller openings and drop some trees. There won't be any cost. He can find some people to help. **Wes moved to work with the Merrimack commission to build up these two walls and drop some trees in one area. Lee seconded.**

Discussion:

Rob asked if it's clear that these trails prohibit OHRV. Not really. We need to put up some signs.

Vote: all in favor

Wes wants to start building a trail in the A-H-L. The commission discussed walking the trail Monday August 15th at 5pm at Austin Rd.

Rob moved and John seconded to adjourn at 10:27pm. Vote: all in favor.

Agenda items not discussed:

- Public Relations Project Proposal - Daryl ***
- Walk Books / Fundraising - Bruce ***
- Naming of A-H-L Forest - All ***
- Signs - John ***
- Heritage Signs - Bruce ***

Round Table

Respectfully submitted,
Jessica Marchant