



Town of Amherst, NH

Conservation Commission

Final Minutes

Barbara Landry Meeting Room

Wednesday, April 10, 2019

Conservation Commission members in attendance were: Chairman Rob Clemens, Jared Hardner, John Harvey, Vick Bennison, Bill Widmer, Rich Hart, Bill Stoughton, Michael Cohen, and Peter Lyon.

I. Call to Order

Chairman Clemens called the meeting to order at 7:02 PM.

II. Chair Comments

Chairman Clemens stated that the coyote hunting bill discussed at the last meeting did not pass its vote.

III. Minutes (from 2/13)

A MOTION was made by Mr. Harvey and SECONDED by Mr. Bennison to accept the meeting minutes from March 13, 2019 as amended.

Voting: all aye; motion carried unanimously.

IV. Treasurer's Report

Mr. Harvey read the Treasurer's report into the record (a copy has been attached to the end of these minutes). He explained that the items charged to the town budget section of the budget need to be spent or encumbered with a legally enforceable agreement by the end of June.

A MOTION was made by Mr. Hardner and SECONDED by Mr. Bennison to charge \$3,450 from the land management section of the town budget for items related to updating the Forest Management Plan.

In response to a question from Mr. Harvey, Mr. Hardner explained that this expenditure would help with completing the process of the Forest Management Plan, such as completing the forest inventory and then compiling the data. There has been an estimated \$10,000 earmarked for this item but it will cost more than that.

Mr. Stoughton stated that he is uncomfortable expending more money without having a quote or knowing exactly how much is needed. Mr. Hardner stated that he will come back with a quote.

Voting: 1-4; motion not approved.

In response to a question from Mr. Widmer, Town Administrator Shankle stated that a contract to encumber money for work yet to be done must be an actual, legal contract.

A MOTION was made by Mr. Hardner and SECONDED by Mr. Bennison to accept the Treasurer's Report as presented.

Voting: all aye; motion carried unanimously.

V. Planning and Permits

Mr. Hart stated that the proposed warehouse off of 101A was discussed during the last Planning Board meeting. A new design was presented which will be split into two phases. The Planning Board approved the items discussed for this proposal. The Planning Board requested that a test well be placed in the proposed area in order to test for pollutants running off from the building and parking lot.

The Planning Board also heard a proposal for a small addition to an industrial building off of 101A. This was approved.

Chairman Clemens explained that Community Development Director, Gordon Leedy, resigned last Friday. Mr. Lyon explained the search process for new candidates for this position to the Commission.

VI. Eagle Scout Project Proposal – Luke Leighton

Luke Leighton presented the Commission with his proposal for an Eagle Scout project that reroutes a section of the Highland Trail. He has been working with Mr. Wes Robertson on this plan. The purpose of the project is to reroute an extremely steep section, thus making it more adequate for multipurpose trail use. The project will not cost any money and he will have access to the NEMBA tool trailer. He will ensure people stay on the new trail by marking the trees and possibly putting “stay on trail or stay at home” signs along the path. He will send out invitations to the mountain biking clubs, NEMBA, the community, and high school community service participants to see if there is any interest in helping with the project.

Mr. Frank Montesanto entered the meeting.

In response to a question from Mr. Bennison, Mr. Leighton stated that a multipurpose trail will include usage for hikers, mountain bikers and cross country skiers.

Mr. Hardner explained that the first rationale for this trail reroute is to create a trail that meets the Commission's Trail Standards. There are safety issues on the current trail due to

its steepness, and also an issue with water runoff creating erosion. This project would be a nice contribution.

In response to a question from Mr. Harvey, Mr. Leighton explained that the plan was not to make the new trail more convoluted in order to interest mountain bikers, but instead to try to keep it as flat as possible.

Mr. Cohen stated that the proposal for this trail reroute seems to set a precedence for a multi-use trail, when the trial period for bikers in this area of Joe English is still ongoing.

In response to a question from Chairman Clemens, Mr. Hardner stated that he believes the current trail should be closed off once this new reroute is complete.

Mr. Leighton explained that he hopes to have this project completed by the end of the summer.

Chairman Clemens stated that the trial program for bikers will be addressed later in the spring, but that this reroute is fixing a trail design problem, at a minimum, for hikers only. Mr. Montesanto agreed that it is commendable to try to fix this trail to meet the Trail Standards.

In response to a question from Chairman Clemens, Mr. Leighton stated that no bridging will be required on this reroute. One small area will need to be benched.

A MOTION was made by Mr. Hardner and SECONDED by Mr. Harvey to accept Luke Leighton's Eagle Scout project proposal as presented.
Voting: all aye; motion carried unanimously.

VII. Amherst Clean-up Day (5/4)

Chairman Clemens welcomed members of the Hollis Conservation Commission, Tom Davies and Joe Connelly, to the meeting.

Mr. Widmer explained that he has been in touch with the pastors at each of the churches around town in hopes that they will post the Cleanup Day flyer. DPW will set up signage for the event. Mr. Widmer has about 1,500 trash bags. He will again roll up sets of 3 bags with gloves to distribute at locations throughout town.

Ms. Patenaude stated that the flyer and FAQ should be on the town's website shortly and will be posted around town in the next couple of weeks.

VIII. Lands and Easements Monitoring Update

Mr. Stoughton explained that the first easement monitoring walk was completed about 10 days ago on the Haseltine property.

Mr. Hardner stated that the walk around was helpful because they were able to meet the abutters and engage in useful communication regarding the ACC.

Mr. Stoughton explained that the first step in the process is to send signed letters to the homeowners regarding the easement on their land. He is hoping to be able to complete 30 easements by the end of spring. He believes it is important for at least two commissioners to be present at each walk when on private landowner's property.

Chairman Clemens stated that the Town Administrator Shankle and Police Chief Reams will be copied on the letter, and a copy of the deed and map of the property will also be included.

Town Administrator Shankle stated that he will meet with the Board of Selectmen to discuss what should be done if any encroachments are found during these walks.

IX. Bike/Ped Trail Plan

Mr. Harvey stated that his concern with the plan involves the bike/ped trail potentially crossing over existing ACC trails, and the need for a different surface or signage.

Chairman Clemens agreed and echoed concerns that some parts of the proposed trail might go through highly ranked ecological areas in town.

Mr. Cohen stated that he believes the plan should prioritize safe walkways and bikeways for townspeople. Interconnectivity items should be addressed secondarily.

Chairman Clemens explained that the plan also mentions publicizing ACC trails and using videos to show the trails and their attributes. There are a number of items in the plan for the ACC to comment on.

X. Grasslands Workshop (5/24)

Mr. Harvey explained that there will be a UNH Professor and a biologist from the Vermont Center for Ecostudies helping with this workshop. They will review the protocol for how to scientifically count birds.

Mr. Harvey hopes that the ACC can work to create a Non-Forest Habitat Management Plan. This would include gathering data, analyzing it and implementing certain aspects. The plan would be to maintain and manage open spaces in order to preserve the different diversity of species seen there, instead of letting the areas grow back into forests over time.

The Commission discussed how to know how much area and diversity of species is the right amount to strive for.

The Grasslands Workshop will be held on May 24th from 7:45am – noon

A MOTION was made by Mr. Harvey and SECONDED by Mr. Hardner to charge up to \$250 from the education outreach line of the town budget to spend on the grasslands workshop. Voting: all aye; motion carried unanimously.

The Board agreed to meet for a work session in two weeks to discuss habitat management planning.

XI. ACC Officer Elections

Chairman Clemens stated that Mr. Robertson and Mr. Montesanto agreed to switch alternate positions, as Mr. Montesanto is more regularly able to attend meetings.

A MOTION was made by Mr. Clemens and SECONDED by Mr. Harvey to nominate Mr. Widmer as the ACC Treasurer.

Voting: all aye; motion carried unanimously.

Chairman Clemens stated that he and Mr. Hardner were both interested in continuing as Chair and Vice Chair.

A MOTION was made by Mr. Harvey and SECONDED by Mr. Bennison to nominate and approve the slate for ACC Chair and Vice Chair.

Voting: all aye; motion carried unanimously.

XII. Round Table

Mr. Widmer stated that two American elm trees will be planted on the Green by DPW in mid-June.

Mr. Bennison stated that there will be a trail stewards get together on the 27th.

The Commission discussed a project for the funds being held by the Milford Rotary Club. They agreed to look into using a professional trail builder to work on a reroute in Joe English. A memorial spot could then be created on the new trail.

A MOTION was made by Mr. Hart and SECONDED by Mr. Bennison to adjourn the meeting at 9:50 pm.

Voting: all aye; motion carried unanimously.

*Respectfully submitted,
Kristan Patenaude*

**Finance and Asset Manager Report
As Of March 31, 2019**

Treasury

- **Conservation Fund: \$594,669.70**
 - Deposit (LUCT 2017 lien pmt): \$1,624.49
 - Deposit (Interest): \$201.78
- **Town Budget FY19: \$18,210.81**
 - Paid: Signage (Classic Signs/Jared): \$116.28
- **Gift: \$16,657.43**
 - Deposit: \$15
 - Deposit (Interest): \$15.96

Assets:

- **Contracts**
 - Pomeroy Farms, Inc – Scott, Bertha Rogers
 - Steve Blaise – Upper and Lower Bragdon
 - Marc Valliancort – Lower Lindabury
- **Capital Items**
 - Ventrac Mower attachment (at Rec Dept)
 - Trail Groomer (at Jared)
 - Various trail maintenance hand tools (at Frank)

Notes:

Town Administrator preference for no encumbrances.

<u>Town Budget Remaining</u>		<u>Proposed Projects</u>
Edu/Professional Dev	\$ 750	
Land Management	\$3450	
Meadow Maintenance	\$3927	Mowing, margin clearing, nutrients - John
Water Crossing	\$2973	
Invasives Mitigation	\$4000	
Signage	\$1430	
Kiosks	\$1000	
Educational Outreach	\$ 500	Bird Inventory Workshop – John

Financial Strategy

Town Budget: *Annual costs that directly affect citizen enjoyment and/or participation.*

Infrastructure (bridges, kiosks, signage, etc)

Trail development and upkeep

Educational outreach (workshops, etc)

Professional development (commissioner education)

Administrative support

Invasives control planning & management

Conservation Fund: *Costs affecting flora and fauna habitat.*

Property Acquisitions

266 Surveys, Legal costs for potential acquisitions
267 Habitat improvement (planning efforts, timber harvests, mowing, etc)
268 Capital purchases (machinery, tools, etc)
269 As directed by town warrant
270