



Town of Amherst, NH

Conservation Commission

Draft Minutes

Barbara Landry Meeting Room

Wednesday, July 10, 2019

Conservation Commission members in attendance were: Chairman Rob Clemens, Jared Hardner, Rich Hart, Vick Bennison, Lee Gilman, Bill Widmer (voting for John Harvey), Bill Stoughton, Michael Cohen, and Wes Robertson.

I. Call to Order

Chairman Clemens called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

II. Chair Comments

Chairman Clemens welcomed Nic Strong, the town's new Community Development Director. He also thanked Mike Cohen, and the other Board members who worked to make the ACC's presence at the town's 4th of July celebration a success.

III. Minutes (postponed from 6/26/19)

A MOTION was made by Mr. Bennison and SECONDED by Mr. Widmer to accept the meeting minutes of June 12, 2019 as presented.

Voting: 5-0-1; motion carried.

IV. Treasurer's Report

Mr. Widmer presented the Treasurer's Report.

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

Voting: all aye; motion carried unanimously.

V. Planning & Permits

Mr. Stoughton explained that there was no new business to be discussed at this time.

VI. Jacobson Property Development Proposal – Carter Scott

Carter Scott, of TransFormations, and Ken Clinton of Meridian Land Services, presented the

proposal. The proposal includes two tracts of land on Christian Hill Road, Lot 5-148 and Lot 5-100. The two lots together make up about 130 acres of land. The plan is still in the conceptual stage at this point, with further surveys and site walks to come.

Carter Scott explained that his interest is in creating net positive homes. These are homes that generate enough electric energy for the house itself, the occupants, and associated automobiles. He is also interested in houses that use alternative energy sources, ones that utilize resiliency (such as with battery back-up options, pellet stoves, and locally grown food), diversified housing, and carbon storing.

Mr. Scott stated that there are opportunities in this proposal for open space and public trails. Ken Clinton explained that there are three levels of open space on this property: 1) land to be used for the animals/crops/solar, 2) land to be used by the residents between the properties, 3) a substantial amount of untouched wooded land which could be used for trails. There is the opportunity for the ACC/Town to accept some of this land as an easement/or to own depending on the desire of the developer and the Town.

In response to a question from Rich Hart, Mr. Clinton explained that the developer plans to keep an open channel of communication with the abutters. He has already reached out to them directly and offered to meet with anyone interested.

Rich Hart asked the developer to consider returning some of the area to a wet meadow, where the land transitions. Ken Clinton stated that the idea could be considered.

Jared Hardner stated that the ACC has two main concerns regarding the developments proximity to the Great Meadow: 1) stormwater discharge 2) nutrient loading. The Commission will be interested to see the technical analysis on these items once completed.

Bill Stoughton explained that there is a large concern regarding aquifer transmissivity at the Great Meadow. He also stated that there is value in connecting possible trails on this property to other properties surrounding it that are owned by the town.

In response to a question from Mike Cohen, Carter Scott stated that he would be working closely with Ian McSweeney, of Farmland Consulting, LLC, to find the right farmer who is passionate about this project who will be able to take the reins moving forward. They will also work with landscape architects and reach out to other experts in this field. There is an agrihood currently being built in Burlington, Vermont, and many other successful farms in the area that can be looked to as examples.

In response to a question from Rob Clemens, Carter Scott stated that the housing will be phased based on the market demand. The farm portion will be phased based on financing.

78 In response to a question from Rob Clemens, Carter Scott stated that the overseer of the land
79 will depend on which entity takes the land. This could be through a 501c3 or a cooperative
80 group.

81
82 In response to a question from Mike Cohen, Carter Scott stated that, if a 501c3 is decided on,
83 there could be educational workshops held in the barn, and many other educational/outreach
84 opportunities available for the public.

85
86 Ron Jellison, 2 Christian Hill Road, explained that he believes there will be an issue with
87 increased traffic coming up through the Village to access the new development, especially
88 with the playing fields that are nearby. Chairman Rob Clemens reminded the public that the
89 ACC does not handle traffic issues and that the Planning Board will deal with any traffic
90 studies involved.

91
92 Tom Quinn, 30 Christian Hill Road, discussed the abundance of wildlife in the area and a
93 concern regarding having the land developed. Carter Scott explained that a different
94 developer might develop the entire acreage of land as tightly as possible, which is not his
95 intent. In response to a question from Tom Quinn, Carter Scott explained that the
96 silvopasture would be used for grazing animals a couple of times a year, such as goats and
97 pigs. He is not concerned with animal waste filtering down into the Great Meadow, as there
98 is a large amount of land in-between the two areas and methods will be put in place to reduce
99 the pollution. In response to a question from Tom Quinn, Carter Scott stated that he intends
100 to plan very intensely to create an owner structure to make sure that this agrihood/farm is not
101 lost over time.

102
103 Jean Hogan, 1 Beldens Mill Lane, asked if the ACC has initiated an effort to preserve and
104 conserve this land. Rob Clemens stated that this developer already has a P&S in hand for this
105 land, and that the ACC was not previously asked to purchase it. The ACC is now concerned
106 with working with the developer to see how best to conserve this area.

107
108 In response to a question from a member of the public, Carter Scott stated that he has been
109 involved with net zero developments and net positive developments before, but this will be
110 the first one to incorporate an agrihood. Ken Clinton stated that a bond will be created during
111 the process that would make sure the Town has the funds to complete the road and
112 infrastructure, if the project were to run into any trouble.

113
114 Wendy Rannenberg, 51 Christian Hill Road, thanked the developer for coming in to present
115 to the public and for considering the opportunity to provide an easement on some of the land
116 to the town.

In response to a question from Ken Avery, 12 Bloody Brook Road, Rob Clemens stated that the developer will have to have an approved plan for stormwater and will have to manage that plan. The State, using that plan, will make sure any possible future issues with it are mitigated.

VII. Eagle Scout Project

Finn Steele presented his idea for an Eagle Scout project. This includes a trail to be built, for which he has obtained the land owner's permission. The trail will be appropriate for beginner to intermediate skill levels and will be multi-purpose. It will loop up with BAF, I Scream, and Humpty Dumpty trails.

Wes Robertson stated that the proposed trail will need to cross both brooks on the property. One crossing will be a wood bridge about 12-16', and the other could be a stone bridge, in keeping with the stone arches on the property.

Finn Steele stated that the ACC trail standard will be followed for this trail.

Bill Stoughton stated that there is a provision in the easement on this land that states that there will be minimal human intrusion. The permission received from the homeowner in this case will be very important.

In response to a question from Rob Clemens, Finn Steele stated that the trail will be about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile long.

In response to a question from Vick Bennison, Wes Robertson stated that there are parking lots located at Betty Arnold and Haseltine that could be used to access this trail.

The Commission discussed why the trail has a long, snake-like structure instead of connecting the trail at one point and making a side loop trail off of it.

In response to a question from Rob Clemens, Finn Steele stated that the trail is currently flagged and that he hopes to be done the project by the first snowfall.

A MOTION was made by Mr. Hardner and SECONDED by Mr. Gilman to approve in concept the proposed trail project, pending ACC approval of the trail during a walk through and a review of the easement language.

Voting: all aye; motion carried unanimously.

VIII. Joe English Reserve Update

Jared Hardner updated the group on the grant project from the Milford Rotary Club. He explained that the plan is to have a professionally built trail in Joe English/Highland Trail

and a memorial bench. The trail will include a return loop and a reroute on the Highland Trail. There is a steep section of the lower trail that will need machine cut benching in order to make it adequately stable. There will be a second site visit by the company on the 22nd and then a final design will be drafted. He hopes that the Commission might consider future professional re-builds on other trails based on this pilot.

In response to a question from Rob Clemens, Jared Hardner stated that the plan has been phased and that the trail building company has been made aware of the amount there is to work with.

A MOTION was made by Jared Hardner and SECONDED by Lee Gilman to spend \$58.00 for sign expenditures, 4x4" "no bikes/bikes allowed" signs, from the Water Crossing and Repair Maintenance line.

Voting: all aye; motion carried unanimously.

IX. Lands & Easements Monitoring Update

Bill Stoughton stated that the group is more than halfway done with monitoring their easements. There have been some more recent issues discovered during the process.

Mike Cohen explained that, on the upper field at Bragdon, they discovered jugs, and plastic piping going from the stream bed to gardens on a private property abutting the field. These gardens are used for a local CSA. Bill Stoughton stated that the deed for the property does not mention any water rights for abutters.

Mike Cohen explained that on the east side boundary of Bragdon, in Bedford near the Animal Rescue League, there is a sign on a tree that names a trail that appears to be being used as a dog walking trail. Some of it is on the ACC's easement.

Rob Clemens stated that a subcommittee is going to be formed to look at encroachments. This subcommittee will include Town Administrator Dean Shankle, Community Development Director Nic Strong, Bill Stoughton, Vick Bennison, and Rob Clemens.

X. Patio Barn Tree Removal discussion

The group discussed two trees that are currently dripping sap at the Patio Barn store, which the owner would like to have removed. They appear to be causing a nuisance, but the deed restrictions note that the thinning of forest trees in this area shall be judicious and for conservation purposes. The Commission discussed if this issue was one of being neighborly or overstepping their bounds.

Wes Robertson explained that the Patio Barn owner has stated that he would be okay with the ACC blazing and putting a sign up for the small path that leads from the I Scream trail to the

ice cream truck located in that parking lot. The new path/trail could then also be added to the ACC's trail maps.

*A MOTION was made by Bill Widmer and SECONDED by Vick Bennison to allow for the removal of 2 pine trees at the owner's expense, on the Patio Barn property.
Voting: all aye; motion carried unanimously.*

XI. Round Table

Mike Cohen thanked the Commission members for their help during the 4th of July. He estimates that approximately 110 people visited the ACC's booth that day. The greatest attractions included the trail map and the conservation factor maps. Commission members were assigned sections to update information on the display signs.

Vick Bennison stated that he found a fire pit on Patch Hill that looks to be recently used. The group decided to put a "no fires" sign in the kiosk, in hopes of quelling the activity.

Bill Widmer explained that he has received the new fluorescent vests that can be used for Clean Up Day next year.

Jared Hardner stated that 3 new bridges have been recently completed. There are two new 8' bridges in Joe English, and one new 16' bridge on the Bicentennial.

XIII. Non-Public Session (pursuant to NH RSA 91-A:3 II [1])

A MOTION was made by Chairman Clemens and SECONDED by Mr. Widmer to enter a non-public session pursuant to NH RSA 91-A:3 II [1] for the purposes of discussing potential property acquisitions.

Voting:

Commissioner Widmer: Aye

Commissioner Bennison: Aye

Commissioner Hardner: Aye

Chairman Clemens: Aye

Commissioner Gilman: Aye

Commissioner Hart: Aye

Whereupon at 9:34pm, the Commission entered into Non-Public Session.

At 10:03 pm, the Commission left the Non-public session and returned to Public Session.

Upon the suggestion that public release of the minutes of the Nonpublic Session just concluded would render the Commission's actions in such session ineffective, MOTION was

made by Mr. Hardner and SECONDED by Mr. Bennison to seal the minutes of the
Nonpublic Session for a period of 60 days, subject to further extension.

Voting:

Commissioner Widmer: Aye

Commissioner Bennison: Aye

Commissioner Hardner: Aye

Chairman Clemens: Aye

Commissioner Gilman: Aye

Commissioner Hart: Aye

There being affirmative votes in excess of the 2/3 required, Motion carried.

XIV. Adjourn

A MOTION was made by Mr. Bennison and SECONDED by Mr. Gilman to adjourn the
meeting at 10:07 pm.

Voting: all aye; motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Kristan Patenaude