

TOWN OF AMHERST
Conservation Commission

October 9, 2019

APPROVED AMENDED

In attendance: Rob Clemens - Chair, Jared Hardner, Vick Bennison, Rich Hart, Bill Widmer – Treasurer, Wes Robertson (alternate), Bill Stoughton (alternate), and Mike Cohen (alternate).
Staff present: Kristan Patenaude – minute taker.

Rob Clemens called the meeting to order at 6:59 pm.

ADMINISTRATIVE:

1. Chair Comments

Rob Clemens stated that the ACC received a note from SHARE in Milford, thanking the group for their donation of apples leftover from the Ciderfest.

He also explained that the ACC received a note of appreciation from Tom and Sandy Christensen, 31 Josiah Bartlett Drive, and a check for \$100 to be used towards trail maintenance. This money will be transferred into the ACC's gift account.

2. Minutes (from 8/28, 9/11)

Review of the minutes was postponed until the next meeting.

Lee Gilman entered the meeting.

3. Treasurer's Report

Bill Widmer presented the Treasurer's Report to the Commission.

The Commission discussed where to draw funds from to make up for an overrun in the Wages line. The group agreed to draw from the Educational Training and Professional Development line.

In response to a question from Rob Clemens, Lee Gilman explained that the invasive mitigation vendor ended up treating the Bragdon and Great Meadow properties at the end of September. Phase I/mechanical mowing of the Scott property should be completed in the next month or so.

Jared Hardner moved to approve the expenditure of \$67.50 to the Amherst Citizen for a public hearing notice for the Grater land acquisition, from the Conservation Fund. Lee Gilman seconded.

All in favor.

Jared Hardner moved to approve the reimbursement of \$60.00 to Mike Cohen for the NHACC Conference registration fee, from the Education Training and Professional Development line. Vick Bennison seconded.

All in favor.

Jared Hardner moved to approve the expenditure of \$700.00 to cover the dues and subscription fees for NHACC. Vick Bennison seconded.

October 9, 2019

APPROVED AMENDED

All in favor.

Jared Hardner moved to approve the expenditure of \$805.00 to cover the overage of fees for meadow maintenance, from the Conservation Fund. Vick Bennison seconded.

All in favor.

Jared Hardner moved to approve the expenditure of \$150.00 for 5 signs to be placed in trail parking lots stating that the area is to be used for trail users only. Vick Bennison seconded.

All in favor.

Vick Bennison moved to accept the Treasurer's Report as presented. Lee Gilman seconded.

All in favor.

4. Planning & Permits

Rich Hart stated that the Planning Board met last week to deal with a lot line adjustment at the Jacobsen property on Christian Hill Road.

Rob Clemens explained that there is a right of way near these parcels that provides public access to the Rough Diamond lot. The lot line adjustment and new parcel created made no mention of this right of way. Bill Stoughton called the Planning Board's attention to this item and it should be taken care of moving forward.

Rich Hart stated that the Planning Board also heard discussion on the Brook Road development. It was decided that a site walk is needed before further discussion can happen. The site walk will be on October 19th at 11am.

Rob Clemens explained that the Board also heard an application for a variance at Camp Young Judaea, but held off on a final decision until the plan can be heard by the ACC. [The application information is noted below.]

CASE#: PZ11724-091019 – Friends of Young Judaea (Owner & Applicant), 9 Camp Road, PIN#: 008-059-000 – Submission of Application/Public Hearing/Wetland and Watershed Conservation District Conditional Use Permit. 1,551 square foot impact to 50' buffer area adjacent to jurisdictional wetland. Zoned Residential/Rural.

Tucker McCarthy, of KeachNordstrom, explained that he represents the Friends of Young Judaea in their application to replace the boy's cabins at the camp. The existing cabins will be taken down and new ones will be constructed with showers and bathrooms included. The Camp is seasonal and only open for about 2.5 months of the year. The original cabins probably date back to the 1950's. The water hookups are temporary, with black hoses attaching to the buildings. This plan will not allow for additional campers, but just an upgraded facility.

October 9, 2019

APPROVED AMENDED

Mr. McCarthy explained that there will be impacts to the 50' buffer. This is a low value wetland which connects to an intermittent stream, and eventually to Baboosic Lake. This will cause an additional 997ft² wetland buffer impact. There is also a small retention basin, 24" deep, next to the proposed bunk area that will be moved in order to offer more room for activities near the cabin area. There is not currently any storm water mitigation on site, so they are proposing two depression areas to deal with storm water. All of the waivers requested as part of this application were approved by the Planning Board, but the final approval was delayed until the ACC could hear the plan in full.

In response to a question from Bill Widmer, Tucker McCarthy explained that all of the cabins are currently tied into the same sewage system, which runs across to the other side of the road.

In response to a question from Rob Clemens, Tucker McCarthy stated that most of the old areas of impervious surface will be removed, except for one of the structures that was fairly new and two sheds. Due to the amount of gravel road that will be rebuilt during the project, there will be an additional 12,414ft² of impervious surface in the area. However, the additional runoff will be held back with the new storm water depressions.

Bill Stoughton noted that this plan seems to be improving the storm water management, and detention and treatment filtering on site.

Tucker McCarthy noted that the new cabins will be built on tiers, so there will be no additional impacts from foundations.

He also explained that the plan for the new cabins is to keep a majority of the existing trees. The trees to keep will be identified during the construction process. The utility layout was shifted around as best as it could be to keep a majority of the trees intact.

In response to a question from Rob Clemens, Tucker McCarthy stated that the infiltration system will be similar to a raingarden design.

In response to a question from Will Ludt, Chairman of the Heritage Commission, Tucker McCarthy explained that the Friends of Young Judaea were more than happy to take pictures and measurements of the existing cabins before demolition and that it is noted on the plans to do so.

The ACC agreed that the project appears to be an improvement overall.

TOPICS:

5. Road Salt Options – Eric Hahn, DPW

DPW Director, Eric Hahn, explained that the town has been using a 50/50 mix of salt and sand to treat roads. Last winter the DPW studied the amount of sand/salt being used, and found that using straight salt, according to NH DES guidelines, used less salt overall. It has also been determined that sand can be detrimental to the environment. The town pays for sand usage three

October 9, 2019

APPROVED AMENDED

times – buying it, spreading it, and sweeping it off the roads and out of catch basins. There is also a correlation between sand and the amount of phosphorus in water ways. The state of NH currently has a Green SnowPro Program, which all DPW workers have attended. The DPW will be adhering to the guidelines of this program and calibrating their equipment to it. The hope is to protect the aquifers in town.

Frank Montesanto entered the meeting.

Rob Clemens stated that the Souhegan River Advisory Council has recommended for the last 2-3 years that any new development in the Souhegan watershed follow the Green SnowPro program.

In response to a question from Rich Hart, Eric Hahn explained that the DPW could find no record or basis as to why many of the “no salt” roads in town were labeled as such.

In response to a question from Lee Gilman, Eric Hahn stated that the DPW doesn’t use a salt brine substance, but instead a passive de-icent, containing magnesium chloride. This has 10% of the corrosivity of unpassivated salt brine. It is not used in every application on roads and will be utilized following the Green SnowPro chart.

In response to a question from Bill Stoughton, Eric Hahn explained that pre-wetting the salt is done very limitedly currently. Gravel roads are currently not treated with salt and there will be no change to this. Adding stone to these roads has helped to reduce the amount of sand needed on them. This will be continued this year, as the budget supports it.

Eric Hahn explained that the Board of Selectmen has already approved that the current “no salt” roads will be treated similarly to how the regular roads will be treated.

In response to a question from Jared Hardner, Eric Hahn explained that magnesium chloride was decided on due to its effective melting temperature and spreadability.

Jared Hardner stated that it is important to get a baseline for the no salt areas in order to determine how they will be effected by adding salt, magnesium chloride, etc. to them. It would take a full year to measure in order to see any changes due to salting. This type of testing will not be able to be completed if the no salt areas are switched to salt treatments this winter. Although the reasoning for these roads to have been made “no salt” was not recorded, there may still have been some rationale to it and it might require current testing in order to determine. Many states note that sand is still the best practice for ecologically sensitive areas. The issue lies in the compounding and accumulation over time in these areas. There is still time to get a baseline for using salt in a controlled manner in these areas.

Eric Hahn suggested using Brook Road as a baseline test area, as it will continue to be no salt and is considered to be an ecologically sensitive area. He supports the sampling of these areas in order to get a baseline measurement of salt and sediment from sand.

October 9, 2019

APPROVED AMENDED

Jared Hardner suggested sampling the ground water and wells, if possible. There could also be an impact to soil and vegetation when moving towards all salt applications, however the level of salt being applied per the suggestion of this program shouldn't create these issues. He explained that the literature is conclusive that there should be sand only applications in ecologically sensitive areas, so the town's no salt areas need to be checked to see if they satisfy the criteria for that.

The Commission agreed that the criteria for ecologically sensitive areas needs to be determined, and then they can decide if the ACC is capable of doing the assessments, or if an outside consultant will need to be sought out. If it is determined that the areas in town satisfy the criteria then no measurements are needed.

Jared Hardner and Eric Hahn discussed a 'no parking' sign requested by owners/abutters at the end of Grater Road.

6. Pulpit Brook Culvert Replacement

Rob Clemens explained that he, Eric Hahn, and Town Administrator Shankle had a meeting regarding the proposed culvert replacement on Route 101 I Bedford, where Pulpit Brook is conveyed. This culvert has been on the red list for some time and will be replaced with a bridge, similar to that completed on Horace Greeley Road. As the Bragdon property sits on both sides of the brook there, the town/ACC is an abutter and impacted party. There is also the request for a turning lane to be installed across the road, a length of which will extend into Amherst. Curbing will be added in order to channel the water that needs to be treated into a swale at the lower end of the hay field. There will be a public meeting on the project on November 7th in Bedford. The plan is to start the project in 2021. There are current restrictions on the Bragdon property, and the ACC will want to make sure that access to the field is not restricted during hay season.

Bill Stoughton stated that the deed prohibits many things on the land, unless there is a necessity found for it, or if it's desirable for conservation purposes. The proposed swale would increase the water quality of the brook, and could be viewed as a good enough reason.

Rob Clemens noted that the bridge will include a critter crossing shelf.

7. Commercial Mowing Contracts/Technical Specs

The Commission discussed the frequency of renewing mowing contracts and the requirements of those contracts. Lee Gilman stated that he would like to speak with the vendors regarding testing, crops, etc. He would also like to add clauses to the current contracts regarding soil testing, treatment standards, integrated pest management programs, and usage reports for pesticides.

Bill Stoughton suggested speaking with Town Administrator Shankle regarding the current thinking on automatic contract renewals for the town.

Rob Clemens stated that Lee Gilman and Bill Widmer will sit down and speak with the vendors, and then work to draft contract language.

October 9, 2019

APPROVED AMENDED

8. Other Business

Bill Stoughton reviews the monitoring program progress. All of the properties within Joe English have been completed. Out of the 116 ACC managed/owned properties, 16 have been monitored; this is 14%. Overall, 29% of the properties in town have been managed. The original hope was to have 1/3 of the properties monitored this year, which leaves the group with about 30-40 more to do before the end of the year.

**Vick Bennison moved to accept an updated Property Spreadsheet, four monitoring reports covering all of the Joe English properties, updated deed and plan information for the Rough Diamond Lot, and deed information for the recently acquired Grater Woods lot from Bill Stoughton into the DropBox. Jared Hardner seconded.
All in favor.**

The Commission discussed the Wilkins Trail, which runs from Lyndeborough Road through Founder's Village, and some easement restrictions on the land. There is supposedly language in a warrant article regarding an agreement for this easement, but this has not been confirmed.

Mike Cohen reviewed a quarterly education and outreach report with the group. There were three objectives that have been worked on since last May. The document identified all work done on these objectives either directly by ACC members, volunteers, or in combination. This is a two-year plan and more work will be completed by June 2020.

Jared Hardner suggested that the document be edited to reflect the three public, very well-attended presentations by the Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee during which the trail networks in town were explained.

Rob Clemens thanked Mike Cohen for his work on this project to increase engagement across the community.

Mike Cohen stated that he would like to upload the updated education and outreach report to DropBox.

The group agreed that this report should be presented every six months.

Rob Clemens stated that he presented the ACC's Strategic Plan on Monday night at the Board of Selectmen meeting. The Board asked about who is monitoring the water quality in town.

Jared Hardner stated that protecting the water resource for the community is a critical issue. He is not sure who has the technological capacity to undertake this project. He recommended working with the Community Development Office to determine the scope and who is appropriate to bring in to work on this issue. The overall design will probably need to be done by a professional. The decision on which professional might need to be used will have to be made quickly if it's to be addressed during the budget process.

October 9, 2019

APPROVED AMENDED

Jared Hardner stated that there is an issue with a landlocked property of about 30 acres, owned by Maurice Bowler. The owner would like to log the property by using a right of way that goes between two abutter residences. This lot is contiguous to other managed properties. There will be a public hearing regarding this lot on October 14th. He plans to be at the meeting and hand the lot owner a letter expressing the ACC's interest in preserving the land.

Bill Stoughton agreed and stated that there would be value in this action for people to see the ACC trying to advance land preservation matters when necessary.

Wes Robertson explained that the Gowing Woods association is still working on language that would hopefully extinguish the easement on two abutting parcels, for all but access to the towers there.

Jared Hardner moved to approve the Eagle Scout project led by Finn Steele on the Arnold property for the proposed trail. Vick Bennison seconded.

Discussion:

Bill Stoughton asked that there be written communication with the Arnolds regarding the easement on this lot.

All in favor.

9. Round Table

Jared Hardner suggested that maps be created and posted in the kiosks that show how the specific trail segments tie into the entire network. Mike Cohen agreed and stated that this is in the works thanks to NRPC.

Wes Robertson stated that the Highland reroute is complete and has been blazed.

The Commission discussed having a presence at any of the upcoming end of the year events for the town (Halloween – Doors on the Green, Tree Lighting).

Vick Bennison moved to expend \$100.00 from the Infrastructure/Water Crossing line, for roofing materials for kiosks. Frank Montesanto seconded.
All in favor.

The group discussed that they and the Recreation Department have shared interest in the areas and infrastructure around PMEC.

Jared Hardner stated that every trail junction in Betty Arnold, Haseltine, Bicentennial, Converse Woods, and Patch Hill now has a "You Are Here" map included.

Rob Clemens stated that the next ACC meeting will be on November 13th.

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October 9, 2019

APPROVED AMENDED

309 **The meeting was adjourned at 10:43pm.**

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314 Respectfully submitted,

315 Kristan Patenaude

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317 Minutes approved as amended: November 13, 2019