

TOWN OF AMHERST  
Conservation Commission

November 13, 2019

**APPROVED**

In attendance: Rob Clemens - Chair, John Harvey, Rich Hart, Frank Montesanto, Lee Gilman, Peter Lyon – BOS Ex-Officio, Bill Stoughton (alternate), and Mike Cohen (alternate).  
Staff present: Kristan Patenaude – minute taker.

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

*Bill Stoughton sat for Jared Hardner. Mike Cohen sat for Vick Bennison.*

ADMINISTRATIVE:

**1. Chair Comments** – none.

**2. Minutes (from 8/28, 9/11, and 10/9)**

**Bill Stoughton moved to approve the meeting minutes from August 28, September 11, and October 9, 2019 as amended [September 11<sup>th</sup>: Line 193 “Gowen Woods” to “Gowing Woods”; October 9<sup>th</sup>: Line 274 “Gowen Woods” to “Gowing Woods.”]**  
**John Harvey seconded.**  
**All in favor.**

**3. Treasurer’s Report**

The Commission reviewed the Treasurer’s Report.

**Mike Cohen moved to approve the reimbursement of Bill Stoughton and Frank Montesanto’s NHACC dues at \$60.00/each. Lee Gilman seconded.**  
**All in favor.**

**Bill Stoughton moved to accept the Treasurer’s Report as presented. John Harvey seconded.**  
**All in favor.**

**4. Planning & Permits**

Rich Hart stated that the Planning Board meeting last week was shorter than expected as the two large proposed developments requested that their applications be tabled to dates in December. The Board recently completed site walks of the Brook Road and Jacobson properties.

In response to a question from Bill Stoughton, Rich Hart stated that the Planning Board has not yet received revised plans for the Brook Road proposal.

Frank Montesanto mentioned that the proposed tiny homes on the Jacobson site seem to be moveable. He wonders how that will work with septic designs.

Bill Stoughton stated that, during the last meeting for the Jacobson proposal, the developer explained that they will be requesting several wetland setback waivers. This is due to the

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increase of densities requested for the site. He noted that if these densities weren't being requested, the waivers could be avoided entirely. The best practice for wetlands is to not encroach upon them. He asked the ACC to consider submitting comments regarding not being in favor of the wetland waivers requested.

Rob Clemens explained that the Commission will discuss this, but, at this time, no waiver requests or information on them have been received.

Rich Hart explained that bits and pieces from the past history of the ski hill were found during the site walk of the Jacobson property.

**CASE#: PZ11884-101419 – JEP Realty Trust & Robert H. Prew Revocable Trust (Owner), & Clearview Development Group (Applicant), 38 New Boston Road, PIN#: 007-072-000 & Boston Post Road, PIN #: 005-159-001. Submission of Application/Public Hearing/Conditional Use Permit. Design review of the potential Planned Residential Development of the two lots noted.**

Rob Clemens explained that the Prew design review proposal was tabled at the Planning Board meeting last week and that plans for it will probably now be revised before the next hearing date in December. The Commission discussed whether to talk about the proposal now or wait for revised plans. The Commission agreed to table this discussion until revised plans are received.

**CUP Application, Lot 8-67 – Tom Carr, Meridian Land Services**

Tom Carr, of Meridian Land Services, explained that he is preparing to present this application next month to the Planning Board. The owner of the property is Mike Isabelle and the property is located at 4 Northend Lane. This is a pre-existing, non-conforming lot. The owner currently has no garage, owns a small business, and has nowhere to store his equipment. The CUP includes a garage with one large bay door and one walk-in door, a reshaped driveway, and a relocated leach field. There is not much space on the property, but the proposal works to move things away from Baboosic Lake while maintaining reasonable use of the property. Due to the proposed changes, there will be a 1% increase on the property of impervious surfaces. Included in the proposal is a storm drip edge trench along certain sides of the house/garage. Between the house and the Jacuzzi pad there is a stone walkway, which will also be good for infiltration.

In response to a question from John Harvey, Tom Carr explained there is a gravel section that will be removed and converted to lawn. This is the primary access way to the front of the house and is currently heavily used. Planting large rooty-type plants over the septic tank won't work, but there is the possibility to plant something along the fringe of the area that will be converted to lawn. There will be notes in the plan regarding the type of fertilizer to be used on the lawn, and this will be specific to the state requirements/restrictions.

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In response to a question from Bill Stoughton, Tom Carr stated that the current septic tank will be removed and replaced with a pre-treatment system. This is considered a good upgrade to the current system.

In response to a question from Frank Montesanto, Tom Carr stated that hope is to receive the necessary permits and approval from the Planning Board to start part of this construction right away.

In response to a question from Mike Cohen, Tom Carr explained that highbush blueberry is a good choice around lakes because it is a natural food source for wildlife while also being an attractive option.

In response to a question from Mike Cohen, Tom Carr explained that intention of the fertilizer restrictions are during the construction of the plan. Once construction is complete the recommendation doesn't run with the property. There are no ways to restrict the homeowner or future homeowners from using fertilizers, but it is hoped that landowners near the Lake will be respectful of the environment.

In response to a question from Rob Clemens, Tom Carr stated that the proposed leach field will be designed to perform better than the trench that is currently on the property. The trench will be abandoned in place.

Rob Clemens stated that the ACC will send its comments along to the Planning Board that it has reviewed the plans and is ok with the proposed changes.

TOPICS:

**5. Bike/Ped Plan – Chris Buchanan**

Chris Buchanan, Chair of the Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee, explained that during the Committee's public outreach process regarding multimodality around the town, it received a lot of feedback regarding trails and the development of new trails. He hopes to discuss how the Committee can help the ACC with the information and eventually to establish a flow to create connectivity through current/new trails in town. The group would also like to provide resources to land owners to help and encourage them to develop new trails on private land.

In response to a question from Rob Clemens, Chris Buchanan explained that the multi-modal transportation vision for the town includes ways to modify the roads to make them safer for users and to find off-road solutions. The modifications to roadways will mostly be done in conjunction with the DPW's regimented roadwork schedule.

Chris Buchanan explained that the Committee received over 500 responses from the public regarding what areas in town they would like to see connected. In some ways there is an approach to look at this and say that nowhere in town should be off-limits to being connected.

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Rob Clemens explained that, while it is not the ACC's job to make sure people can get from point A-to-B in town, the group does have an interest in people getting outside to enjoy the trails in town and possibly in creating larger, longer hiking opportunities across town.

John Harvey explained that he, Jared Hardner and Chris Buchanan worked together to create a flow chart with very detailed steps that accommodates the ACC's trail standard that can be used to look at new/upgraded trails with desired connectivity in town. He suggested that the ACC support this idea with a few Commissioners to use the flow chart to evaluate proposed projects and then report back to the ACC for discussion/approval.

In response to a question from Rob Clemens, Chris Buchanan stated that there are a few places that could have multi-use routes, but the important first step is to establish trails there and then look to upgrade the trail at a later date.

Chris Buchanan explained that he would like to see someone overseeing the possible opportunities for connectivity that could occur around town. If no one is looking for these opportunities they won't be noticed when they arrive. For example, the Atherton project is a small one that could connect many to the Village.

Mike Cohen stated that the goals of the ACC are to conserve and preserve land. There is also a goal to get people outside as an educational tool to help them to understand the nature of the environment. These goals do not necessarily align themselves with the same audience being sought by the Bike/Ped Committee. It is important to see if the trails can be connected, but the primary importance is in the conservation of the resource. He is unsure as to where the responsibility lies as to who owns the connectivity process outlined here.

Chris Shenk, 248 Boston Post Road, explained that he represents both a hiker in the woods and someone who uses bike trails. He appreciates both. The Boston & Maine Rail Trail runs behind his house and he is currently ready to turn that land over to whatever entity can use it for connectivity purposes, once the other half of the Rail Trail is also obtained. He believes the ACC, DPW, BOS, and town should work together to improve safety on roads/trails and, where applicable, make connectivity possible. He believes there are different types of trails that can serve different needs.

Peter Lyon suggested that the Bike/Ped Committee already exists in a way that could be utilized to look at these potential trail networks and connectivity. A subgroup could be formed to look at potential projects and then report back to the ACC to ask for support. There is an existing expertise in town that can be taken advantage of for finding easy projects to start with.

Chris Buchanan reviewed 22 potential off-road connectivity projects with the ACC including: Atherton Commons, B&M Rail Trail, an extension of the Bicentennial Trail, Old Mail Road, etc.

## **6. Amherst UnCommon – Joe Cummings**

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Joe Cummings explained that he and Kristan Patenaude have been working to obtain a library of video clips for the upcoming show, Amherst Beyond the Common. The idea is to take the power of story and wrap it around community groups, committees, etc. He suggested that some ACC members look into wearing GoPro cameras while out in the field, in order to get some interesting clips. There are a number of potential interviews/segments that are still yet to be filmed.

In response to a question from Rob Clemens, Joe Cummings explained that the show has not yet been produced, but will eventually be able to be seen on Channel 20 and through the town website. The show is still under development, but he's happy to give the ACC access to some of the clips he has shot of them for educational/outreach purposes.

Rob Clemens stated that the ACC is happy to help push the project forward in any way it can.

#### **7. Tree Stand Policy**

The Commission agreed to postpone this topic to a later meeting when Vick Bennison and Wes Robertson can be in attendance.

#### **8. Other Business**

##### **Birdhouse Building & Placement Proposal for Open Grassland Habitats**

John Harvey explained that one of the goals of the ACC is to find a way to manage habitats to increase the wildlife populations in them. One component of this process could be building birdhouses to be installed at the right places and the right orientations. He introduced the ACC to Mark Worwetz, a local birdhouse builder.

Mark Worwetz explained that he identifies himself as a meadow steward. He has a property in the northeast corner of town and has been putting up birdhouses there for about nine years. The key things about birdhouses are their internal dimensions, a proper sized hole, good drainage, and being easy to clean out at the end of the year. In terms of mounting, it is easiest to put them on pipes, if the meadows are going to be mowed. He explained that it costs about \$47/unit for building and mounting on a pipe.

In response to a question from Mike Cohen, Mark Worwetz stated that the height of the pipes is about 4-6' normally.

In response to a question from Rob Clemens, John Harvey stated that bluebirds have started to overwinter in New Hampshire and are moderately populous, but that the ACC will decide the focus for any birdhouses put up. It will cost about \$250 to create and mount 4 birdhouses to start. Mark Worwetz will be the creator and steward of the boxes; it is hoped to eventually get more wildlife trail stewards as well.

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In response to a question from Bill Stoughton, Rob Clemens suggested that the ACC approve a first round of birdhouses to use as a template and look into organizations that fund these types of projects in the future.

**John Harvey moved to expend up to \$250 from the Conservation Land Fund to purchase and place four birdhouse boxes, with John Harvey and Mark Worwetz to be responsible for the successful implementation and monitoring of these boxes. Lee Gilman seconded.**

**Discussion:**

The Commission discussed possible complications to placing or monitoring the birdhouses. Some of these include a complicated set-up to the birdhouses themselves and barriers regarding the posts to mount them on.

Mark Worwetz outlined some best practices including: not mounting the birdhouses on trees due to predators, correct placement of the birdhouses on the posts, metal pipes which do not allow predators to climb them, and cleaning out the birdhouses to prevent rot.

**All in favor.**

Rob Clemens explained that a new trail in Joe English that is a bypass outlet off of the Harding Trail needs to be approved. The design of this trail was sponsored by the Milford Rotary Club.

**Bill Stoughton moved to approve the trail as presented. Frank Montesanto seconded.**

**All in favor.**

**Bill Stoughton moved to approve the addition of a number of items to the DropBox, including two monitoring reports, a conservation plan update, and several wetland updates. Frank Montesanto seconded.**

**All in favor.**

John Harvey explained that Lori Mix has been working on creating the Purtell easement trail and is ready to help create some trails for the Atherton Commons/Country Mansion residents on that land. There are two possible entrances to the trails; one requires breaking a stone wall and the other requires building a small bridge. The senior folks in these communities have been loving the trails and there is the chance to extend their connections outside of the Village in the future.

In response to a question from Rob Clemens, John Harvey stated that the flow chart displayed by Chris Buchanan will be used to determine which area is the best for parking. If it's decided that Amherst Street makes the most sense, 6-8 yards of fill will need to be brought in to make the area level.

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Rob Clemens stated that he does not want to encourage parking and that the trails are to give pedestrians in these communities access to the Village.

John Harvey stated that he will come back to the ACC with a project outline for approval.

**9. Round Table**

Mike Cohen noted some takeaways from the NHACC conference: to review and regulate the natural resources inventory and use it for planning, to make sure that the conservation goals for the town are actively and assertively involved in the Planning Board's Master Plan process, and to decide how best to inform town residents about the conservation plan and the associated actions.

Rich Hart explained that the Master Plan process this time will focus on a thematic approach instead of a silo approach.

Rob Clemens stated that the next ACC meeting will be on December 11<sup>th</sup>.

**Bill Stoughton moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:15pm. Frank Montesanto seconded.  
All in favor.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Kristan Patenaude

Minutes approved: December 11, 2019