

TOWN OF AMHERST
Conservation Commission

March 11, 2020

APPROVED

In attendance: Rob Clemens – Chair, Jared Hardner – Vice Chair, Bill Widmer – Treasurer (alternate), John Harvey, Vick Bennison, Rich Hart, Peter Lyon – BOS Ex-Officio, and Mike Cohen (alternate).

Staff present: Kristan Patenaude – minute taker.

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

ADMINISTRATIVE:

1. Chair Comments

Rob Clemens thanked Jared Hardner for helping run meetings and get things accomplished while he was away.

2. Minutes (from 2/26)

**Vick Bennison moved to approve the meeting minutes from February 26, 2020, as presented. Rich Hart seconded.
4-0-1; motion carried (J. Hardner abstained).**

3. Treasurer's Report

Bill Widmer presented the Treasurer's Report. He explained that Frank Montesanto is going to be inventorying the ACC's infrastructure material needs.

Jared Hardner stated that there will be an estimate from an invasives contractor for work to be done in Caesar's Brook. The contractor may also want to go back to Bragdon one more time.

Lee Gilman entered.

Chairman Clemens stated that Frank Montesanto is actively seeking to see if there are items regarding trail infrastructure that are in need of attention.

Lee Gilman stated that he has some proposals for work on Scotts Field and Caesar's Brook. The property line on the west side of Caesar's Brook is completely impacted by invasives. The recommendation is to mow the landing and selectively up the side. Spraying can then be done within a year. This could take up to three days, with a two person crew, at about \$2,650/day.

The Commission discussed using the rest of the money in the Invasives Mitigation line item first, and then using money in the Conservation Fund to cover the rest.

Lee Gilman suggested that the Commission do some outreach before treating the area, to make sure that the abutter is aware and okay with the property lines as laid out. He explained that there is a similar issue on the Bragdon property, and the contractor would like to know the exact setbacks and property lines before treating the area.

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Bill Widmer stated that, due to a new purchasing policy for the town, it is recommended to get competitive quotes for these items and issue a formal purchase order.

Lee Gilman explained that the contractor took care of mowing on the north side of the river at Scotts Field a couple of weeks ago. It may not take a full day to complete the other side of the property. This would be at the same rate as previously mentioned, but for a half day the cost would be \$1,325.

The Commission discussed whether this mitigation work was encumbered last fall and already paid off. Chairman Clemens stated that the proposed scopes and estimates are needed for these projects. He stated that the work on these properties should be put on hold until the competitive bid information is further understood and any prior approvals are examined.

The Commission discussed any pertinent changes coming from the town's new purchasing policy. Bill Widmer explained that there will need to be a scope of work detailed and a bill from the provider that matches the request for service.

Peter Lyon explained that the process hasn't really changed, but simply has been put into writing. This was a recommendation that came from the auditors.

Chairman Clemens introduced Joe Connelly, member of the Hollis Conservation Commission, to the group.

4. Planning & Permits

Rich Hart explained the last Planning Board meeting was supposed to include a presentation on the Farmhouse Marketplace proposal, but this was postponed. The Planning Board also reviewed an application for an accessory dwelling unit, which was accepted. The Planning Board discussed the Buckmeadow acquisition and seemed to be in favor of it. There was also a lengthy discussion regarding possible changes to the Integrated Innovative Housing Ordinance.

Rich Hart explained that the petition warrant article to elect Planning Board members passed at the town election. He does not wish to run for an elected position and will, thus, step down from his place on the Planning Board.

Chairman Clemens stated that the Farmhouse Marketplace discussion that was supposed to be held tonight will be postponed until March 25, 2020. He also suggested that the Commission postpone any discussion on the application for the Jacobson property until March 25, 2020. He doesn't believe there is any need for the ACC to comment on a Horace Greely Road lot line adjustment application. He is also unsure if there is any need for the group to comment on a subdivision application for Walnut Hill Road.

Jared Hardner explained that this subdivision application is for one property that has two houses on it. The two sons of the property owner are hoping to split the property formally into two and keep both existing homes on it.

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TOPICS:

5. Farmhouse Marketplace CUP Application – Ken Clinton, Meridian

This item is postponed until the March 25, 2020 meeting.

6. Buck Meadow Update - Jared

Jared Hardner updated the group on the due diligence process for this acquisition, including that the building code inspection has been completed, a legal review of the easement has been completed, and the water quality tests have been completed. All of the water tests came back clean. The core requirements to close the deal are complete at this time. The compatibility of the playing fields with town ordinances will be ensured, and the ACC and Recreation Department will agree on the nutrient management plans for the playing fields as well. He explained that Meridian Land Services also re-delineated the wetlands and buffers on the property.

In response to a question from Mike Cohen, Chairman Clemens explained that the project may require an Alteration of Terrain permit from the state, depending on the amount of material that will possibly be moved.

Jared Hardner explained that there will also be a review of the equipment and property that comes with the clubhouse. Some of this will be kept; the rest will be sold. He stated that there was a meeting with the condo abutters regarding the project, during which most seemed to be in favor. There will be a combination ACC and Board of Selectmen meeting on March 23rd; a quorum will be needed in order to take an ACC vote on the acquisition. The Board of Selectmen will then take a formal vote on the 30th and the deal will potentially close on the 31st.

Peter Lyon commented that this appears to be a really good project with collaboration across the board. He's also very happy to see the amount of outreach to the neighbors.

7. Earth Week Plans

Mike Cohen stated that Amherst Earth Week will begin on April 18, 2020, with Clean-Up Day, and finish with a celebration at Buckmeadow on the 25th. This celebration will be a nice opportunity to share the potential benefits of the acquisition with the community. He is currently looking into ways to promote Earth Weeks throughout the town. He and Kristan Patenaude have discussed writing articles for the newspaper, Facebook, and the town website. He suggested a possible idea for the Buckmeadow celebration of having a small panel of speakers, including Jared Hardner, Craig Fraley, Chris Buchanan of the Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee, someone from the Garden Club, etc. These groups could then all be wrapped together in a collaborative way. There could also be a guided walk of the wetlands and potential trail area.

Chairman Clemens suggested that the Buckmeadow celebration could also be more like an open house, with the presenters stationed around the room for the public to visit as they walk through.

Mike Cohen explained that he and Kristan Patenaude are working on creating educational posters that can be brought to different ACC events.

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Chairman Clemens explained that the property name will be kept, but that Jake Young, the original developer, may be memorialized within the building somehow.

Jared Hardner stated that he is happy to give a presentation and a guided walk during the celebration.

In response to a question from Mike Cohen, Chairman Clemens explained that there is already a sketch completed for a perimeter trail loop on the property. It may also be possible to add an internal loop.

In response to a question from Mike Cohen, Jared Hardner explained that the draft management agreement outlines who (ACC/Recreation Department) is in charge of what for the property. An informal commitment was made to the condo abutters to involve them in the process possibly through an advisory committee to the project. This idea needs to be further discussed at the March 25th meeting.

Jared Hardner explained that he has engaged a local resident photographer, who is a birder and interested in grasslands. She is willing to take photographs and document the restoration of the grasslands on the property. John Harvey stated that Joe Cummings, videographer for the town, is also willing to document the process.

Bill Widmer stated that Town-wide Clean Up Day is scheduled for April 18th from 9am-1pm. There will be two collection sites this year: at the entrance to Souhegan High School and on the Village Green. He spoke to DPW Director, Eric Hahn, who is willing to host trash receptacles at the two sites and put up electronic signs around town. He is hoping to get trail stewards to go out and do some off-road cleaning. He would also like to reach out to all of the other departments, groups, clubs, churches, PTAs, etc., in town to garner interest. The high school has requested that their receptacle remain in place from Thursday to Monday, in order to open up more times for youth involvement. Kristan Patenaude will be updating the flyers from last year for the event. Bill Widmer needs to pick up more gloves, but has some blue bags from last year's event.

**Bill Widmer moved to allocate up to \$350.00 for posters, signs, and other miscellaneous costs for Clean-up Day, from the Educational Training Professional Development line. Jared Hardner seconded.
All in favor.**

8. Other Business

The group discussed elections and appointments.

**Chairman Clemens nominated Bill Widmer for Treasurer for a one year term. Rich Hart seconded.
All in favor.**

Vick Bennison nominated Jared Hardner as Vice-Chair. John Harvey seconded.

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All in favor.

Jared Hardner nominated Rob Clemens as Chair. Vick Bennison seconded.

All in favor.

Rob Clemens explained that, in 2010 it was decided for the ACC to have a voting member on the Planning Board, in order to integrate the ACC's viewpoints. Rich Hart has held this seat for the past ten years. With the passing of the petition warrant article, next year the Planning Board members will be elected and there will be no provision for an ACC seat, unless an ACC member decides to run and is elected. Bill Stoughton has agreed to serve in Rich Hart's spot until the election of Planning Board members next year.

Chairman Clemens recommended to the Board of Selectmen for Bill Stoughton to fill the ACC's one year seat to the Planning Board. Jared Hardner seconded.

Discussion:

Peter Lyon stated that Bill Stoughton should still express his interest through a letter to the Board of Selectmen.

In response to a question from Mike Cohen, Rich Hart explained that the ACC has an opportunity to submit an opinion regarding applications to the Planning Board that is available for them to see in their packets. Planning Board meetings are also open to the public, and so any citizen can go and state an opinion during the meeting for an application itself.

Voting: all in favor.

Peter Lyon thanked Rich Hart for his number of years as a representative to the Planning Board from the ACC. He stated that Rich Hart represented his community well with their best interests at heart.

John Harvey explained that Monday, March 16, 2020, at 7:00pm, he will be holding a public meeting regarding the Purtell trail projects. The meeting will give information to abutters and will hopefully allow some people to sign up to do an initial trail clear up. He hopes that this project will be completed by the spring.

Rich Hart explained that he's hoping to start leading trail walks once a week and report back on them. He also questioned the lack of information up on the kiosk at the Great Meadow. Jared Hardner stated that there's a great opportunity at that location to have information on interpreting what one might see while out on the boardwalk.

Mike Cohen stated that there is an educational opportunity coming up on March 22nd and 29th regarding black bears and bobcats at the Peabody Mill Environmental Center (PMEC), hosted by the Recreation Department. There is also going to be a workshop, hosted by the Milford

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221 Conservation Commission regarding a Guide to Planning Trails that Allow Wildlife to Thrive.
222 This is being held on April 7, 2020, at 7pm at the Milford Town Hall.
223

224 Rob Clemens stated that the Saving Special Places workshop, put on by UNH Extension, is on
225 April 4, 2020, in Alton.
226

227 In response to a question from Rob Clemens, Lee Gilman explained that the large ash tree at
228 PMEC was treated last year. If it is determined that the tree should be treated again, he would
229 recommend finding someone in-house to spread fertilizer-grade phosphite on it, as a cheaper
230 solution.
231

232 **Jared Hardner moved to accept the Treasurer's Report, as presented. Vick**
233 **Bennison seconded.**
234 **All in favor.**
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236 Bill Widmer explained that Currier Orchards completed their pruning work at Lindabury
237 Orchard. A great deal of slash was left, but that has been cleaned up. He is looking to spray there
238 next and asked for recommendations for that service.
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240 **John Harvey moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:40pm. Jared Hardner seconded.**
241 **All in favor.**
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250 Respectfully submitted,
251 Kristan Patenaude
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253 Minutes approved: April 8, 2020