



**Town of Amherst, NH
Conservation Commission
FINAL MINUTES**

Barbara Landry Conference Room

Wednesday, 13 December 2017, 7:00 PM

*Conservation Commission members in attendance were: Rob Clemens, Jared Hardner, Rich Hart, Peter Lyon, Victor Bennison, and William Widmer – Alternate.
Also in attendance: Will Ludt, Kristan Patenaude*

I. Call to Order

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

II. Bragdon Sledding Hill/Labelle Winery Joint Use Parking Area – Concept Presentation – Ken Clinton, Meridian Services and Amy Labelle

Mr. Clinton and Ms. Labelle made a presentation to the Commission regarding creating a small, joint use parking area behind Labelle Winery for town and private winery use. Mr. Clinton explained that the current parking area for the sledding hill next to Labelle is undersized, not designed in any way, and downright unsafe when citizens need to cross the road in order to get to the hill. Ms. Labelle has allowed overflow parking from that lot in her winery parking lots; however, there are times when even these lots become congested and she needs the space for her employees and patrons.

Ms. Labelle is suggesting creating a safe, properly designed, constructed and maintained by Labelle, joint use parking area to alleviate these issues.

Ms. Labelle explained that she loves seeing the citizens coming to sled on the hill and doesn't want to have to turn away anyone who needs to park safely in order to participate. However, during high-traffic events at the winery, this has become a problem in the past.

Mr. Clinton stated that there is a deed restriction on the property where the suggested parking lot is being considered. Ms. Labelle will pay for counsel to review the validity of her suggestion, with the Commission's approval and the groups can move forward from there.

In response to a question from Mr. Widmer, Mr. Clinton stated that the suggested parking area would create 65 new parking spots. Mr. Widmer suggested that this size lot might be

46 too big for the suggested usage. Mr. Clinton explained that this is an initial plan which can
47 be fine-tuned.
48

49 Mr. Hardner stated that his bias is towards partnership and collaboration. This area of land
50 is not currently utilized very often and he would like to see it better used by the public. It
51 would be nice to create a future running trail through the area, or generate other ideas for
52 increased usage for both parties. Ms. Labelle agreed and stated that those ideas run nicely
53 with her future ideas.
54

55 Mr. Lyon agreed with the future use ideas, but expressed a concern regarding the visual
56 effects to the landscape in that area. Ms. Labelle agreed and hopes to strategize with
57 planning teams.
58

59 In response to a question from Mr. Lyon, Ms. Labelle stated that there are currently about
60 138 current lot spaces in all of her parking areas, and that, without the sledding parking
61 issue, these are adequate for her current needs.
62

63 Mr. Clemens stated that the plan has positive aspects regarding the safety aspect of the
64 sledding hill parking, however there are legal issues associated with the deed. He is also
65 concerned with the aesthetics of the proposed lot, in regards to preserving the rural/green
66 entrance to Amherst on 101. There is also a broader concern in the scope of conservation
67 items in the area.
68

69 Mr. Clemens requested that Commissioners walk the property sometime soon, in order to
70 get a better understanding of the area. The ACC will also work to contact an attorney in
71 order to determine the cost to review this presentation.
72

73 **III. Bill Long Memorial Nature Program Proposal Overview – Sue Long and Kimberly** 74 **Rhault**

75 Ms. Long explained that her father lived in the Amherst area all his life and worked as a
76 logger. After his passing, his family decided that they would like to dedicate a place to him.
77

78 Ms. Rhault works for Opportunity Networks, a non-profit dedicated to helping individuals
79 with disabilities work with members of the community to create beneficial partnerships.
80 She is working with Ms. Long and her mom to create a dedicated place in Bill Long's
81 name.
82

83 Mr. Clemens explained that the Commission's gift account takes in charitable donations
84 and some of these are used to create benches at sites along trails, or rebuild bridges.
85

86 In response to a question from Mr. Clemens, Ms. Rhault explained that they are hoping to
87 find a trail that is easy enough for people with disabilities to explore. Mr. Bennison
88 suggested that B&M Trail, the Currier Trail, or the Brook Trail.
89

90 Ms. Long suggested also putting birdhouses in whichever area they choose, as her father
91 loved birds. Mr. Bennison stated that the Currier Trail would be good for this as well. Mr.
92 Hart also suggested Lindabury as a possible site.

93
94 Mr. Clemens thanked Ms. Long and Ms. Rhault for coming and stated that Mr. Bennison
95 and he will work on the next steps and be back to them shortly.

96 97 **IV. Chair Comments**

98 Mr. Clemens explained that he was given a directive from the Town Administrator that if
99 the Commission wants a member of the Community Development Office at one of their
100 meetings, they need to run it by Mr. Gordon Leedy first.

101 He also explained that the Board of Selectmen has encouraged the Commission to meet
102 more frequently with the Community Development Office in order to mesh interests.

103 104 **V. Review of minutes from November 8, 2017**

105 *A MOTION was made by Mr. Bennison and SECONDED by Mr. Hardner to accept the*
106 *meeting minutes from November 8, 2017 as amended.*

107 *Voting: all aye; motion carried unanimously.*

108 109 **VI. Treasurer's Report**

110 *A MOTION was made by Mr. Bennison and SECONDED by Mr. Widmer to accept the*
111 *Treasurer's Report as submitted.*

112 *Voting: all aye; motion carried unanimously.*

113 114 **VII. Planning Board Update**

115 Mr. Hart reviewed a conditional use permit off of Brookwood Ave., across from Wilkins
116 School, with the Commission. This proposed permit includes about 10 units and was
117 recently changed so that the major trail created will be available for public use. It will skirt
118 the wetland there and make for a nice short hike.

119
120 Mr. Clemens stated that this trail could have a lot of potential in the future to connect with
121 other trails. It will run along Beaver Brook and give nice views of the wetlands and some
122 mature forests.

123
124 In response to a question from Mr. Ludt, Mr. Clemens stated that he believes the newly
125 created road will have to breach the stone wall that is on the property in order to cross it.

126 127 **VIII. 2018/19 Budget Update**

128 Mr. Clemens stated that he met with the Board of Selectmen on Monday night. They
129 requested that the Commission answer some questions regarding 2 proposed warrant
130 articles. The Commission discussed Articles 29 and 30 and raising public awareness for
131 them. Ms. Patenaude will help the Commission on this.

132
133 In response to a question from Mr. Hardner, Mr. Lyon explained that the Recreation
134 Department identified a grant opportunity to create trails and thus want to participate,
135 which is why they're involved in Article 30.

136 **IX. Conservation Plan Update**

137 Mr. Hardner explained that there was a meeting with UNH Extension to better understand
138 how to prioritize efforts in land acquisition. The Commission discussed how important it is
139 for the Commission to maintain the town's hydrologic resources. He also questioned if the
140 Commission is allocating too much attention to the currently managed lands and not
141 enough to private land owners.

142
143 Mr. Clemens stated that the Board of Selectmen was also wondering about this and was
144 hoping to identify key areas of town for future acquisition. The Commission will need to
145 work closely with the Community Development Office, as they often hear about upcoming
146 properties.

147
148 The Commission discussed the best way to engage private landowners. They debated using
149 a broad based strategy or investigating the big land owners in town.

150

151 **X. Chestnut Tree Project Update**

152 Mr. Widmer explained that there will be chestnut trees planted at Bragdon in the May
153 timeframe. 4-5 trees will fit into the left area on the Bragdon hill, and some could possibly
154 fit onto the right side too. They will need about 4-5 people on the planting day to help dig
155 holes. There will be a metal sign put up at the trailhead with pictures of the people who
156 help.

157

158 **XI. Trail Development and Use / Trail Brochure Development**

159 The Commission discussed the trail brochure draft with Ms. Patenaude. The group also
160 discussed horses and motor vehicle use on trails.

161

162 Mr. Bennison stated that he has updated the maps and signage at many of the kiosks and
163 will now wait to hear back on how they're doing.

164

165 **XII. ACC Video Project**

166 Mr. Joe Cummings discussed his project, Amherst Beyond the Common, with the
167 Commission. He's hoping to highlight people and groups in order to get the word out to the
168 community. He and Keller Nunley videotaped Mr. Clemens and Mr. Harvey to discuss the
169 ACC and its mission. A short 2 minute clip of this was put onto Facebook and received
170 over 1200 views and some very nice comments. He would like to continue with more
171 interviews highlighting different trails or aspects of the ACC to bring knowledge to the
172 general public.

173

174 **XIII. Round Table**

175 Mr. Clemens explained that Mr. Harvey and Mr. Gilman are working on a possible project
176 with the state regarding the New England cottontail and its limited presence in New
177 Hampshire. Amherst has the opportunity to establish a state-sponsored program in an area
178 along the Bicentennial Trail.

179

180 Mr. Widmer stated that he looked into a couple of granting foundation organizations. He
181 presented the Commission with information from the Fields Pond Foundation and the Open

182 Space Institute. The Commission agreed that seeking these small grants to help with their
183 initiatives is a good idea.

184
185 The Commission discussed more of the legal aspects of the Labelle presentation. Mr.
186 Clemens stated that he will ask Mr. Jim O'Mara to order the attorney time in order to begin
187 to frame the issue and this will be further discussed at the next meeting.

188
189 **XIV. Adjourn**

190 *A MOTION was made by Mr. Bennison and SECONDED by Mr. Hardner to adjourn the*
191 *meeting at 10:11pm.*

192 *Voting: all aye; motion carried unanimously.*

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198

199 Respectfully submitted,

200 Kristan Patenaude