



Town of Weare

Conservation Commission

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Conservation Commission

Andrew Fulton, Chairman
Stephen Najjar, Vice Chair
Wendy Stevens, Secretary
Jeff Jackson, Member
Lisa Purington-Grolljahn,
Member

CONSERVATION COMMISSION – DECEMBER 17, 2014 DRAFT MEETING MINUTES

Present: Andy Fulton, Wendy Stevens and Steve Najjar.

Guests: Dave Ward, Tom Jones, Bethany Fulton and Town Forester Jeremy Turner.

I. **CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Fulton called the meeting to order at 7:15 pm.

II. **PISCATAQUOG LAND CONSERVANCY VISIT**

Mr. Jones stated he has been involved with PLC's new conservation strategy and one of the products of that are maps that help target resources. He presented a map. He added that there is some ground truthing that needs to be done, but the Tier 1 is highest priority, Tier 2 second highest. High quality watersheds, agricultural land and wildlife habitat are of highest priority. They are comparing their lands with the high priority areas. He added that other conservation commissions are pointing out areas where they have interest which helps them focus. Mr. Jones stated the only active project he has going on is the Knowles property reaching towards the Perkins Pond area. Ms. Stevens mentioned the S. Sugar Hill area, which on the map shows as 2nd tier and Chairman Fulton stated there may be some activity there. Mr. Najjar reviewed the Ferrin Pond area and several corrections were made together with Mr. Turner in terms of ownership corrections. Ms. Stevens noted their highest priorities shown on the map were Melvin Valley, Everett and Ferrin Pond areas. Chairman Fulton mentioned the Chipmunk Falls area. Mr. Najjar noted the Duck Pond parcel was missing. Ms. Stevens noted Dustin Meadow was missing and information was on the town web site. Mr. Turner was charged with getting the correcting overlays to Mr. Jones.

III. **TOWN FORESTER UPDATE**

Mr. Turner presented the *Northern Woodlands* magazine and pointed out page 7 is featuring a giant maple tree he has located in Weare.

Mr. Turner presented his quarterly progress report. He stated all the boundary work is done on the Woods Family Forest, which went over budget due to the survey work. He will blaze it this winter.

The survey work on the Brookshire lot has been completed (east and west) Phase I. There were three major encroachments and he was not comfortable working with monuments that were on people's lawns. Mr. Todd will be reducing his price by 15% as he moves through staking, monumenting, blazing and painting the subdivision that has all these problems. He is going to take photography and draft a letter to give us language. Chairman Fulton asked if Mr. Turner will have more blazing work to do after Mr. Todd is done. Mr. Turner responded yes, with this complicated subdivision, it was beyond his scope and he has done all he can on the ground, then referred to Mr. Todd, and will then return to working on himself to bring it to completion in the most cost effective way possible. Chairman Fulton asked about bidding out these services in the future. Mr. Turner responded in a few cases in the past (Eastman and Felch), Mr. Todd had been the surveyor of that property and his familiarity with the

parcels seemed to make sense and the scope was small. In another case, he had done the work with abutting parcels and he has been good to work with. Mr. Turner stated to solicit and reel in interest, the time and resources on a piece mail project, he doesn't know how effective that would be. Mr. Najjar stated this is the most expensive project, big lesson learned, and we will run into the same thing with Duck Pond. Mr. Najjar pointed out that it is a Planning Board issue and they create the developments but don't demand boundaries and measurements to be completed. Chairman Fulton summarized that generally if it is a small project, the process of bidding does not make sense. He is comfortable with Mr. Turner's services and recommendations. Mr. Najjar stated conceptually, if we go back and look at the original proposal, maybe we should never be seeing this subcontractor. Ms. Stevens state she errs on the side of transparency and would like to see subcontractor hires – she would ultimately like to see their funds go to purchasing as much land as possible, and that is the end goal. Mr. Turner agreed, he will communicate in the future and agrees it is food for thought. Mr. Turner stated what is left for Mr. Todd to do on Brookshire is 4 issues: setting steel garden stakes at all points established by the previous survey. He will be documenting this with a digital camera, and prepare a letter for encroaching abutters and the consequences of their continued encroachment. He will locate all of the lines (4,000 feet) wrapping around all of the residences, and then will yellow boundary paint. He will also set masonry nails as monuments where there is pavement.

Chairman Fulton stated they approved a contract with Todd Land Use Consultants at the last meeting and it was subsequently amended and the additional expenses are already voted and approved.

Mr. Turner stated there are now 7 Tree Farm enrollment processes completed and congratulated the commission. All 7 forests are now registered tree farms. The commission thanked Mr. Turner for his outstanding work.

In November they completed the Eastman meadow opening project. Because of the wet conditions, they focused on the field work and they weren't able to complete a few ancillary items, but they did get 90% of what they were hoping to get done. The neighbors did interact with the loggers and it was a positive exchange. Things are mulched and seeded and are in good shape. In Year 2, they should review the field conditions and decide how to continue the maintenance of the permanent opening. He discussed cottontail vegetation. He added that this process brought in \$762 instead of having to pay for maintenance which was a positive.

Mr. Turner stated the weather wasn't helping with the Poor Farm Timber Harvest. They did have an opportunity to demonstrate to the public their activities there. They gave a nice story, the objectives of ownership, and helped to educate abutters. They had a genuine interest in what was going on there. They partnered with the Piscataquog Land Conservancy and Meadowsend Timber and put together a workshop and 40 people attended the event; it was a huge success. The weather was good, there was no equipment operations with the weather being so warm. People had open minds, great questions, and most of them had never even seen an active job. Mr. Jones noted that many of them were from very far away. Mr. Turner added they started at Poor Farm for 1.5 hours, and together with John Newton, the County Forester, and they helped people to understand what was going on. There was fresh snow, so they did some tracking, fisher, coyote, white tailed deer, they had all crossed by the old Poor Farm house site. They continued up the road to Mr. Doscher's woodlot so the public was able to see the end result of a commercial harvest. Mr. Turner and PLC agree there is a demand for this type of learning regarding managing natural resources and forestry so they are going to try and conduct these every six months. Chairman Fulton asked if the abutter's complaint was addressed? Mr. Turner stated he did think that many of the questions were answered, and 20 to 25% of the attendees were from the neighborhood, and they did ask candid questions and he feels they were answered to their satisfaction, admitting that it is a disturbance, and then explaining about the very well thought through plans that are involved in the disturbance. Mr. Jones added that there were people that had a negative impression of logging in general, and you could see they gained a new understanding about what a harvesting operation involves and considers, and why.

Chairman Fulton asked about the rest of the harvest? Mr. Turner stated they were waiting for the ground to firm up and the completion date was unclear at this time.

Ms. Stevens asked if sponsoring one of these events in the future involved a financial investment? Mr. Turner stated no, and the commission agreed sponsorships should be decided on a case by case basis as they occur.

Mr. Turner continued with his quarterly reporting stating there is some blazing and painting left to do on the Woods Family Forest, no new expenditures there. Same thing with Brookshire east – just some boundaries to be blazed up on an existing FSA. He will get us Mr. Todd's survey and letters and final results for Brookshire.

Upcoming timber harvests (Jewett Lots and Chevey Hill), he stated have been delayed and his plan is to continue on that path it just might take a little longer. Jewett has a logistical problem with access and Chevey Hill, they just have a lot going on. Mr. Najjar asked about improving the road as far as access to the Chevey Hill parcel and would we have to make improvements as the road divets. Ms. Stevens asked if the winning bidder was supposed to make the improvements? Mr. Turner stated he likes to include it as part of the project so that he doesn't have to deal with getting permissions, etc.

Mr. Turner stated Woods Family Forest is not really a high priority because there is not damage or rot, etc. He thought 2016 or beyond.

Mr. Turner stated he saw in minutes that Ms. Stevens had some sign ideas and he was wondering about those. Ms. Stevens shared the Eastman Conservation Trails Development Plan and explained the grant in process that includes signage. She liked Mr. Turner's language that he used in the Woods Family Forest Management Plan and wanted to use that as a template. The brown state trailhead signs were discussed and that is all in progress.

Mr. Najjar stated in years past, you encumber money from projects, and all that we have from the town forest account is \$2,840, and everything else is complete. Because of this, the Warrant Article is all that's left to track. Mr. Turner asked about Poor Farm and the Balch Rd. which splits the property in half. The town owns that road which goes from Poor Farm through the lot to the development (Balch Hill Rd.) and it receives a lot of traffic. Is it something we would like to gate on both ends? Ms. Stevens stated with the parcel not having any signage of permitted and non-permitted uses perhaps a gate would be a good idea since timber harvests seem to send a message that traffic is allowed which is not the case. Chairman Fulton stated it could be encumbered in 2015 since the harvest is not complete yet.

Mr. Turner stated that Ms. Bolton contacted him this fall and asked if he had any ability to get firewood for her firewood drive. Mr. Carmichael (the harvester out at Poor Farm) ended up bringing cut and split firewood for her drive effort which he thought was a real nice philanthropic thing to do for the Town of Weare.

Mr. Turner discussed the 2015 Forest Service Agreement, stating he will send it. Chairman Fulton discussed this FSA has to do with all non-harvest activities. Mr. Turner stated yes this is just to cover his time for quarterlies, bid showing, meeting with contractors, etc. Mr. Najjar made a motion that in the event that the annual town forest article doesn't pass, they cover any expenditures from the Conservation Account up to \$2,000 for the terms of the forest management agreement. Ms. Stevens seconded the motion. Ms. Stevens asked if that was legal? Mr. Najjar stated yes, and it will cover expenses from now until March. Chairman Fulton asked the advantage of this vs. motioning to encumber? Ms. Stevens stated she thought the motion to cover up to \$2,000 was more clean than trying to specify hourly rates before they were actualized.. All were in favor of the motion and it passed

unanimously. Mr. Najjar thanked Mr. Turner for his outstanding services.

Mr. Turner shared information from landowner Martha Evans, who owns a 2 lot subdivision next to Jewett Rd. stating this privately owned lot impedes management access and he is just noting it would be great to acquire that parcel. He was able to reach the woman on the telephone in California and she is available for discussion.

Mr. Turner asked if he should put together a Town Forester report and to let him know. He will put together a summary and submit it to the Conservation Commission to use or not to use.

IV. TRAILS SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATE

Mr. Ward stated in addition the Eastman Plan, he was given authorization to apply for the RTP grant and he did so. He stated they have come back with a list of requirements, which will require some of Ms. Bolton's time and some signatures, some quotes for excavation work. He needs a letter of good standing from the Secretary of State that the Trails Subcommittee is in good standing which will require a \$5 fee, or an expedited fee of \$25. Or we can avoid that process and say it's the Town of Weare and have the Selectmen sign off on it. The awards are made in January. Chairman Fulton stated by all means, work to get the appropriate signature from Ms. Bolton to fulfill the grant requirements. Chairman Fulton stated it may as well be sent to the Board of Selectmen for their signature.

Mr. Ward has spoken with DPW regarding the Eastman parking lot and he is not on board with that and will take direction from the Board of Selectmen. He does not feel that they should be plowing someone's driveway. Mr. Ward asked if it was a right of way? Mr. Najjar stated no, we fee own the driveway and the residence has a right of way to it. Mr. Ward stated he thinks it needs to be widened and bank runned so you could pass two vehicles. Mr. Najjar stated you have a jurisdictional wetland there and you will need to address that. Mr. Najjar stated we should hire Tom Carr and work with DES to make the improvements. Mr. Ward mentioned the matching aspect of the grant, the RTP grant covers 80% of the costs and our 20% can be either funds or labor. If you have donated or town time, it is considered part of the 20%. Ms. Stevens asked if there were other people besides DPW that could do the work and Mr. Najjar stated we could hire someone. He added we could post it and bid it out. Mr. Ward stated as part of the grant, he has had to go out and get four quotes. Mr. Ward stated there was a DRED Natural Heritage Inventory Review required as part of the grant. Mr. Najjar stated that might cost some money.

Ms. Stevens reviewed the Eastman Trails Development Plan and proposed changing mutters to mushers regarding dog sledding. She also added that the plan could be changed to match the RTP grant so that snowmobiles were purchased and not rented. Mr. Najjar stated he is opposed to owning equipment as he stated snowmobiles have a very high maintenance cost and did we want to purchase canoes for any water recreation activities, and where do you draw the line? Mr. Najjar thought that owning equipment should be run by the Board of Selectmen, even in the aspect of liability insurance.

Ms. Stevens thought we should leave the plan to show the renting of the snowmobile from the Weare Winter Wanderers as it addresses the insurance issues.

Chairman Fulton and Mr. Najjar agreed that perhaps there are aspects of Parks & Rec coming into play with the recreational aspect and that the Trails Subcommittee should reach out to them in order to work together. Chairman Fulton stated he didn't think we were prepared to start purchasing chainsaws or mowers.

Ms. Stevens asked for permission to approve the Eastman Conservation Parcel Trails Development Plan. Mr. Najjar asked why did it need approval? Mr. Ward replied that we need to get permission from PLC. Mr. Najjar stated he though a wetlands scientists should review the area before any work is done.

Chairman Fulton confirmed to Mr. Ward that permission was addressed at last month's meeting as far as grooming the trails this winter. Mr. Najjar stated the 4" culvert may be a wetland and it is something Mr. Carr needs to look at. Chairman Fulton stated it is a wetland. Mr. Ward stated he is aware of the requirement for trails. Mr. Najjar asked if the bridge is included, and shared his opinion on how the bridge should be done. Mr. Ward will check into RTP grants for grooming. Mr. Najjar stated the wetlands part of this plan is very important. He stated we did not need to go to PLC as we already had permission to access and that the plan is not ready to present to PLC, we need a wetland scientist and a professional map beforehand.

Mr. Ward stated for now, we can trim, have dogs, groom it, etc. and we have permission? Mr. Najjar stated yes, it is the big capital improvements down the road that will be an issue and for now it is all set. Mr. Ward will get in touch with Mr. Carr. Mr. Ward also stated he will be speaking with the SAU 24 Superintendent regarding the Eastman trail system.

V. **PLANNING BOARD ITEMS**

The Planning Board is discussing putting together a subcommittee or work group to address the Conditional Use Permits in the Wetland Buffer. Mr. Najjar is interested in joining this.

VI. **DES ITEMS REVIEW**

Several DES items were reviewed without comment. Mr. Carr was contacted by the wetlands bureau regarding the culvert proposal at Eben Page Marsh. Mr. Carr notified them that it was a design with no plan to build at this point.

VII. **Petition Article to Modify Zoning, 166 Shady Hill Rd.**

Mr. Najjar stated this was in a really heavily conserved area and he thinks we should adamantly oppose this zoning request. Ms. Stevens asked how many conserved parcels does it abut? Mr. Najjar stated roughly 6 contiguous parcels. Ms. Stevens asked which parcels does it abut? Mr. Najjar stated it abuts both the SPNHF easement and Chevey Hill parcel. Lot 136 actually touches both. Mr. Najjar stated if Ms. Reade only needed to sell one 2 acre lot, why was she proposing to change the zoning on both parcels? He added that he has reached out to Henry Tiffany for any comment. Mr. Najjar made a motion that we recommend that the Planning Board does not support the petition article based on the close proximity of the conservation land and the wetland resources, and it doesn't make sense that if they were looking to subdivide one parcel that they would want to change the zoning on both. Ms. Stevens seconded the motion. She stated that she was looking for abutter's signatures on the petition article and she did not see any signatures from Shady Hill Rd. or from Tiffany Hill Rd. which are where the parcels reside. The vote passed unanimously.

VIII. **WOLF CREEK PROJECT**

Mr. Najjar stated he does not think the property will be needing an appraisal. Mr. Najjar made a motion to either provide \$1,000 deposit for the Purchase & Sale of Map 407, Lot 4, directly to the attorney handling the project out of the Conservation Fund or to reimburse the Russell Foundation if they are willing to provide the deposit. Ms. Stevens seconded. Chairman Fulton asked if that route works out would that mean the reimbursement would have to come from the Conservation Fund as opposed to the Town Forest account? Mr. Najjar said yes.

Mr. Najjar made a motion to recommend to the Board of Selectmen that we purchase Map 407, Lot 4 for the purchase price of \$50,000.00 (fifty thousand dollars) with approximate closing costs of \$2,500 from the Town Forest account using the funding authorized by Warrant Article 29 passed in March of 2014 and to encumber that amount. Ms. Stevens seconded. Chairman Fulton asked does the \$2,500 include the deposit? Mr. Najjar stated to utilize the Conservation Fund as we don't have time to get permission of the Board of Selectman. Chairman Fulton stated he would like to see it reimbursed from the Conservation Fund to the Town Forest Account. The vote passed unanimously.

IX. **CONSERVATION COMMISSION 2015 TOWN WARRANT ARTICLES**

Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of Twenty Thousand Dollars (\$20,000.00) to allow the Conservation Commission to secure contracted services with the Town's Licensed Forester to prepare forest management plans; secure contracted services for the Town Forest maintenance, and fund this appropriation by authorizing the withdrawal of that sum from the Town Forest Account?

Shall the Town raise and appropriate the sum of One Hundred and Forty Thousand Dollars (\$140,000.00) for the Conservation Commission expenditure toward the purchase of new town forest land, and fund this appropriation by authorizing the withdrawal of that sum from the Town Forest Account?

Mr. Najjar made a motion to recommend that the Board of Selectmen post the above mentioned Warrant Articles to the 2015 Town Warrant. Ms. Stevens seconded. The vote passed unanimously.

X. **BUDGET 2015**

Chairman Fulton stated he had submitted the budget figures the same as 2014.

XI. **ADJOURNMENT**

Ms. Stevens made a motion to adjourn at 10:32 p.m. Chairman Fulton seconded. The meeting was adjourned.

A true record,

Wendy J. Stevens