



Town of Weare Conservation Commission

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Conservation Commission

Andrew Fulton, Chairman
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CONSERVATION COMMISSION – November 18, 2015 draft MINUTES

Meeting called to order at 7:28 PM by Chairman Fulton.

Members present: Andy Fulton, Steve Najjar, Bill Bolton

Guest: Stuart Bernard

1. Chevy Hill Town Forest – Stuart Bernard addressed the commission to inquire about plans for the upcoming Chevy Hill TF harvest, to express his concern and that of his neighbors that it not be clear cut, and to find out what kind of mess will be left behind. He had received a notification letter from town forester Jeremy Turner and saw evidence of the harvest planning process while walking the woods. Vice Chairman Steve Najjar explained that the harvest expectations have been spelled out in the forestry management plan for the parcel and that a variety of harvest methods are typically employed during forest management harvests. Whole tree harvesting (chipping) leaves less slash behind in the woods than cut to length operations. There are ecological benefits to leaving branches/slash/brush behind as it provides habitat and in decomposition enriches the soil. Aesthetically, this might be viewed as a mess and it does make walking through the woods more difficult for a while. But for small habitat patches, clear cut harvests are not employed. Mr. Najjar explained that we don't have a definitive harvest schedule but that Mr. Turner is available for updates and is expected back for a quarterly meeting with the Commission at our regularly scheduled January meeting. Chairman Andy Fulton showed Mr. Bernard how to access the forest management plan via the conservation pages on the town's website. Mr. Fulton noted that Mr. Turner sent a letter to road agent Redmond dated 10/15/2015 concerning alterations necessary at the landing/road turnabout.
2. The commission considered three Planning Board items.
 - a. Proposed Zoning Ordinance changes: Planning Board chairman Craig Francisco had emailed comments and proposals from recent PB meeting. The primary proposed change would be to remove the town by the Conservation Commission from being a potential default easement holder on the open space associated with a proposed cluster subdivision. The commission had suggested this during discussion with Mr. Francisco and PB member Bruce Fillmore earlier in the year. At PB meeting, the board was reluctant to adopt the proposal with the feeling that at times the conservation value of open space might be of interest to the town but not enough to garner conservation organization/land trust interest. Misterns Najjar and Fulton expressed interest in seeing the change go forward, with the belief that it would encourage the developer to design the cluster subdivision in a way that would make the open space attractive to a conservation organization as easement holder. Other more proscriptive approaches were discussed but thought not likely as flexible and effective as simply removing the town from the easement holder equation. Mr. Najjar suggested that the PB and CC meet in joint session to discuss the matter and to make the point that easement monitoring is a burden that the CC doesn't have the manpower to adequately address. Mr. Fulton agreed to propose such to the PB. Additional proposed changes met with broad favorability by the PB included boundary blazing and signing to be completed before subdivision handover.
 - b. Regarding the proposed Melcher Subdivision on Colby Road, the CC looked for records but was unable to find any, and as such had no comments to offer the PB.

- c. The Commission completed a site plan review for a proposed new building on the north side of Rte. 114 on Boisvert property across from Lanctot's Plaza. A new 1,200-sq. ft. building is proposed on Map 19/Lot 11. Comments for the PB are whether wetlands were delineated, why the 25-foot buffer wasn't shown, should a wetlands stamp be provided or note on installer stamp to indicate wetlands work, and whether the 3' culverts at the north end of the depicted area existing or proposed.
3. Mr. Najjar **motioned** and Mr. Bolton seconded the motion to approve the draft October 2015 minutes as final. Misters Najjar and Fulton voted in favor, Mr. Bolton abstained, and the **motion passed**.
4. Poor Farm trail conditions:
Town Administrator Naomi Bolton had emailed the commission about a complaint received by the Board of Selectmen. Mr. Najjar reported that in response he had recently walked the Poor Farm town forest and found a couple of areas where the recent timber harvest work had left some difficult walking and potentially aesthetically unpleasant sights. Mr. Bolton offered that we could better educate our administrators and the BOS regarding what's involved in our timber harvests, and that the fashion in which we walked through the issue with Mr. Bernard was a good example of what we could do. Though the commission had not received a complaint directly and so could not address particular concerns, Mr. Najjar described an area where slash was piled on the trail and another where tall 4-6' stumps were left behind. Mr. Turner thought there could be some ecological value to the stumps but MTL could lower them at a price of \$20/hour. Mr. Najjar **motioned** and Mr. Bolton seconded the motion to approve up to \$2,000 from the 2015 MTL Town Forest Account forest maintenance allowance to cut the stumps and clear slash from the established trail. Mr. Fulton called the motion, all voted in favor, and the **motion passed**. The commissioners noted that the Poor Farm timber harvest had netted approximately \$57,000 in stumpage fees deposited into the Town Forest Account.
5. Proposed 2016 forestry warrant articles:
Mr. Najjar inquired about account balances and Mr. Fulton informed the commission that in August 2015 the Town Forest Account balance was \$223,000 and the Conservation Fund balance was \$79,000. No account activity reflecting the \$60,000 Wolf Creek forest purchase was apparent; therefore, it was estimated that \$150,000 was safely available for 2016 expenditure from the Town Forest Account. Mr. Najjar **motioned** and Mr. Bolton seconded the motion to forward a proposal to the BOS for 2016 warrant articles to authorize expenditures of up to \$125,000 from the Town Forest Account for land purchase and \$25,000 for forestry services with the warrant language to be the same as that employed with the 2015 articles. All voted in favor and the **motion passed**.
6. Administrative assistance for minute taking:
Mr. Fulton noted Mr. Bolton's email suggesting that minute taking assistance be sought out. Misters Najjar and Fulton had separately spoken with Town Administrator Bolton about the issue and there was general concurrence that a reasonably priced offer of assistance should be supported. Mr. Najjar **motioned** and Mr. Bolton seconded the motion to request an additional commission annual budget line for \$840 to allow administrative support with minute taking and completion, to be arranged by the Town Administrator. All voted in favor and the **motion passed**. Mr. Fulton is to forward the request to the Financial Administrator and the BOS via the Town Administrator.
7. Town Forest timbersales:
Town Administrator Bolton had emailed the commission with a concern about town forest timbersales going to the same harvesters over and over. Mr. Najjar explained that even with notifications and the open bidding process managed by the town forester, there are specific requirements for the type of harvest equipment needed based on the type of forest harvest work being undertaken, such as whole tree harvesting and cut to length operations; and based on those parameters some operations are

more likely to be awarded the harvest than others. The complaints received by the town administrator were noted by the commission but do not warrant changing our forestry operations. Mr. Bolton suggested that additional educational effort may be helpful so that these concerns can be more expeditiously put to rest.

8. Mr. Najjar motioned and Mr. Bolton seconded the motion to approve the draft October 14, 2015 minutes final as written. Misters Najjar and Fulton voted in favor, Mr. Bolton abstained, and the motion passed.
9. Commission meeting agendas:
Mr. Fulton said he will try to get agendas out by the night before meeting. Based on his experience, Mr. Bolton recommended putting together the agenda and sending it out to potentially interested parties such as the BOS with enough time for consideration and comment. He has found that this approach helps foster better communications and limits instances of misunderstanding and misinformation. Mr. Fulton noted the value of such an approach and will attempt to improve the timeliness of agenda presentation.
10. The commission considered whether attendance at a BOS meeting is in order to address recent concerns with management of town conservation parcels, and to provide information about ongoing and anticipated activities involving town lands under our management. Mr. Fulton suggested that it would be appropriate to foster better understanding and awareness, even though there are already available multiple avenues to awareness. Based on conversations with the town administrator, the commission concluded that immediate attendance wasn't necessary. The commission also decided that town forest quarterly reports should be sent to the BOS to try to foster greater awareness during this period of fairly active town forest management. The commission will strongly consider January 2016 BOS meeting attendance for a presentation and availability to as broad a discussion as the BOS desire.
11. Mr. Fulton noted that the town administrator had initiated a discretionary budget freeze which impacts our GIS license renewal. Mr. Najjar said that it is necessary for upkeep of our system. Mr. Fulton is to see if there is wiggle room to move this to payment before year end.
12. Mr. Najjar informed Mr. Bolton of the commission's plan from last month for a more comprehensive approach to trails management on conservation and/or town forest parcels. Mr. Fulton noted Mr. Bolton's email and expressed his appreciation for the ideas presented and concerns expressed. Mr. Bolton discussed his experience with snowmobile trails which are admittedly somewhat distinct in their point to point traverse nature. Where trails have been abused rewards for information about lawbreaking activity have been helpful and trail cameras are sometimes necessary. Trails management and development is a difficult task that will stretch the commission's management ability, and may well extend beyond our conservation land purview. Forester Turner should advance the ball on the issue when he reports out on his research and trails master planning RFP development effort in January 2016.
13. Mr. Fulton noted receipt of two MTL invoices; 1633 for \$2,949 and 1658 for \$960. Mr. Najjar **motioned** and Mr. Bolton seconded approval of invoice payment from the annual town forest maintenance allowance, all voted in favor and the **motion passed**.

Mr. Najjar **motioned** and Mr. Bolton seconded, all voted in favor, and meeting adjourned at 9:28 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrew Fulton (WCC Chair)