



Town of Weare

Conservation Commission

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Conservation Commission

Andrew Fulton, Chairman
Stephen Najjar, Vice Chair
Jeff Jackson
Lisa Grolljahn
William Bolton

CONSERVATION COMMISSION – March 9, 2016 draft MINUTES

Meeting called to order at 7:13 PM by Chairman Fulton.

Members present: Andy Fulton, Steve Najjar, Lisa Grolljahn, Bill Bolton

Guests: John Lawton, Richard Butt, Dave Ward

1. Public Access to Conservation Lands, Trails, and Trail Planning

Citing the standard operating procedure of the Commission to address guests at the start of meeting in lieu of following a rigid agenda, Chairman Fulton invited John Lawton to share his concerns with the Commission. Mr. Lawton has recently extensively explored hiking trails in New Boston and appeared before the Commission to share his observations. He has been favorably impressed by the number of guided walks available to the public in New Boston. He likes the trail guides, parking, signage, and well-marked trails. He stated that in contrast, he finds Weare conservation lands hard to find and inaccessible if found. He would like Weare to move rapidly with volunteer effort to establish trails, parking, signage, and guides on town conservation lands. He suggested the Conservation Commission contact Barbara in New Boston to discuss their program.

Vice Chair Steve Najjar, Mr. Fulton, and member Bill Bolton discussed with Mr. Lawton their experience with the status and evolution of the Commission's lands and trails, website upgrades through the concerted efforts of Wendy Stevens during her stay on the commission, history and status of the Trails Subcommittee, activity last summer and the prior winter at the Eastman Conservation Area Town Forest with the Trails Subcommittee, challenges with vandalism and illicit trail driving and riding in Weare, and ongoing efforts to develop a trails inventory and management program. Mr. Lawton would not like to see additional easement purchases until the existing lands are better managed. Mr. Najjar pointed out that the commission has been focused for several years on the acquisition of fee-owned town lands, particularly forest lands, rather than easements. Other groups are the prime movers on easement purchases. Where the commission does support easement procurements, we do require public access assurance. Mr. Lawton also expressed an interest in seeing a clear accounting of public funds expenditure showing a commitment to trails work and that New Boston appears to do more with their money. Mr. Fulton shared his desire to see trail and trail head improvements, but also the reality that due to severe limitations in volunteer manpower and energy for new initiatives within the commission, we are going in a different direction than New Boston and looking to hire professional help in trails planning and management.

Richard Butt also spoke regarding his interest in public access to the town conservation lands. He said that he appreciates the work of the commission and understands the limitations of a small number of volunteers. While he supports Mr. Lawton's vision he feels that the expectation that Weare should be on par with New Boston regarding trail head parking, signage, and guides is unrealistic. Mr. Butt noted that there are gaps in Trails Committee meeting minutes postings and that he came to the meeting tonight to emphasize the importance of having the minutes available to the public and to request that the commission see to the requisite improvements.

Dave Ward of the Trails Committee spoke regarding the status and work of that subcommittee. He mentioned that there may be some meeting minutes that he can move on so that they are available to the public. He expressed his anticipation of getting the committee back on track after being held up by the commission for trails master planning.

Mr. Najjar introduced the draft request for proposal (RFP) that he and town forester Jeremy Turner had worked up. The RFP was patterned on the commission's effort several years ago to acquire the services of a contract town forester. Based on his recent experience and discussions, Mr. Lawton expressed his opinion that trails management could be accomplished solely with volunteer effort. Mr. Bolton mentioned that New Boston has left out provision for any use of town lands by motorized means which is how a large part of the public experiences and appreciates the outdoors. Member Lisa Grolljahn mentioned that she would like any hired assistance to be well-versed in landing grants for trails work. Mr. Ward assured the commission that there is a very interested group of volunteers willing to make trail improvements. Mr. Bolton proposed assigning cleanup of the two town conservation lands with existing trail networks to the Trails Subcommittee, and seeing how the effort goes with the volunteer base. He would like to see current emphasis on maintenance rather than growth and that we could build some forward motion with the maintenance of the Ferrin Pond and Poor Farm trails now. The others will take more time. Mr. Fulton asked Mr. Ward if he thought the Trails Committee membership would be interested in spring trail cleanup at Ferrin Pond and Poor Farm. Mr. Najjar mentioned that Nelson Forestry Suppliers would be a good source of marking paint for use with trail marker stencils. Mr. Najjar **motioned** and Ms. Grolljahn seconded the motion to approve up to \$300 from the Conservation Fund or Unrestricted Grant Account for trail marking and maintenance supplies including but not necessarily limited to tree marking paint, brushes, and stencils. Mr. Fulton called the motion and all voted in favor. The **motion passed**.

2. Mr. Najjar **motioned** and Mr. Bolton seconded approval of the February 10, 2016 commission meeting minutes as written. Mr. Fulton called the motion and all voted in favor. The **motion passed**.
3. Mr. Najjar **motioned** and Mr. Bolton seconded the motion to advance the commission's slate of officers as exists for an additional term. Misters Fulton and Najjar accepted the re-nominations as Chairman and Vice Chairman, respectively. Mr. Fulton called the motion and all voted in favor. The **motion passed**. The officer position of Secretary remains unfilled.
4. Site plan review, NSN Training/Russel Crevoiserat, 403/16.1, 731 Concord Stage Road. Reviewed without comment.
5. Mr. Fulton informed the commission that the DES MtBE Bureau will be conducting drinking water well sampling in Weare this spring to evaluate groundwater quality in the vicinity of known contamination occurrence.
6. Mr. Fulton mentioned that the Forest Society remains concerned about the lack of Collins Ledge monitoring. He is to contact them to inform them of our current monitoring limitations.
7. Other agenda items noted for the record:
 - i. PRLAC Annual Report received
 - ii. Saving Special Places 2016 conference Saturday April 9th at Prospect Mountain HS
 - iii. Unrestricted Grant Account balance \$642.23
 - iv. Corrected MTL invoice 1-1677
 - v. Conservation Fund and Forest Account balances
 - vi. Hemlock invasives workshop Sat 4/9 10-2 Amherst
 - vii. MTL request for NRI data – Wolf Creek and Toby Hill

- viii. Craig Francisco email re. sharing natural resource/conservation planner (SNHPC)

Mr. Najjar **motioned** and Mr. Bolton seconded, all voted in favor, and meeting adjourned at 9:37 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrew Fulton (WCC Chair)