



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 – February 8, 2017 final MINUTES

Meeting called to order at 7:09 PM by Chairman Fulton.

Members present: Andy Fulton, Steve Najjar, Jeff Jackson

Guests: Kurt Nelson (Eversource), Kris Wilkes (Eversource/VHB), Lauren Malerich (Eversource), James A Zattler (Eversource-construction), Sherrie Trefry (VHB)

1. Kris Wilkes of VHB briefed the commission regarding updates to the Eversource 3271 Distribution Line upgrade project. Most of the power transmission line is in Goffstown but a portion extends into Weare. The type of replacement power cable being installed was changed which changed the pole placements. Poles in the Weare section of the line will still be outside wetlands. Though there are no permanent wetland impacts, mitigation is required due to the size of the temporary impacts, newly calculated at 11,767 square feet. Secondary impacts such as tree cutting within the right of way are also considered in the mitigation equation.

Sherrie Trefry of VHB further discussed the mitigation options. Regulatory authority for the mitigation is EPA and the Army Corp but by agreement, mitigation is managed by NH Department of Environmental Services. For small impacts like this case in Weare, the regulators typically like to see deposit of a fee (in lieu of wetlands restoration) in the state's Aquatic Resource Mitigation fund, from which larger wetlands preservation or restoration projects are supported through grant awards. The fee for this project would be approximately \$13,000. However, federal regulations require Eversource to offer Weare the option of supporting in kind mitigation within town borders. Vice Chairman Steve Najjar asked if the local mitigation could be purchase of conservation easement on town forest land with substantial wetlands resources. Commission members expressed interest in having this fee amount be of direct local benefit, rather than pooled with other funds from which larger projects are supported through award of ARM grants. Commission Member Jeff Jackson asked how soon it would have to be done. Mr. Fulton asked if the permit could go forward with a commitment to work through easement purchase with a qualified land trust.

Kurt Nelson of Eversource suggested that the in lieu fee should be deposited in the ARM account and that Eversource could offer VHB's services in pursuing a grant award for the town. The commissioners expressed concern with the uncertainty of the grant application process and a preference for in kind mitigation within town borders. Ms. Trefry thought this may be possible but expressed concern that a local project of this type might take too long and could interfere with the tight time line for the power line reconstruction project. Ms. Trevy said that the first point of contact and the one who could best answer these questions is Lori Sommer of NHDES Wetlands. Chairman Andy Fulton indicated that he would contact Ms. Sommer to find out whether the prospect of pursuing an easement to be held by an organization like the Forest Society or Piscataquog Land Conservancy would be a viable option for this mitigation project. Ms. Trevy suggested that a parcel would have to quickly be identified for easement protection and that map and lot number would have to be forwarded. Mr. Najjar reviewed the commission's listing of town forests and suggested that the Bartlett Forest parcels have significant wetlands and high quality supporting uplands as well as connectivity to larger open space parcels of similar high conservation value.

2. The commissioners took under additional consideration the responses received in January to the trails master planning RFP. They narrowed the field to two firms under continued consideration. Mr. Fulton suggested inviting the prime candidate to the commission's March meeting for an interview prior to selection. Mr. Fulton was to notify the remainder of the four respondents that their proposals are not being further considered at this time.
3. Mr. Najjar reminded the commission that forester Jeremy Turner is expected at the next meeting for a quarterly report and that we should consider spot herbicide treatment for invasives at the Eastman Conservation Area Town Forest.

Ms. Najjar **motioned** and Mr. Jackson seconded, all voted in favor, and meeting adjourned at 8:42 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrew Fulton (WCC Chair)