



Town of Weare

Conservation Commission

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Conservation Commission

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

CONSERVATION COMMISSION – January 13, 2016 draft MINUTES

Meeting called to order at 7:08 PM by Chairman Fulton.

Members present: Andy Fulton, Steve Najjar, Jeff Jackson, Bill Bolton

Guest: Jeremy Turner (Town Forrester, MTL), Jason McGraw (MTL), Tom Jones (PLC)

1. Town Forester Jeremy Turner of Meadowsend Timberlands Ltd. (MTL) presented his first quarterly report of 2016. Mr. Turner summarized work completed since his October 2015 report. The back unit harvest at the Eastman is complete and generated \$7,933 to the Town Forest Account. Driveway maintenance to the Greene's property was completed. The harvest bid for Chevy Hill was awarded to DH Hardwick and will likely occur in the summer of 2016. Commission member Bill Bolton suggested that additional notice to the Board of Selectmen and the Town Administrator might be beneficial communication. The post-harvest cleanup at Poor Farm is complete. Work in progress includes harvest of the Jewett lots which is awaiting a break in access communications with an abutter who apparently resides in California. The Tobey Hill forest management plan is approximately 25% complete and boundary marking is underway with blazes to be painted in 2016. Recreational Trail master planning RFP preparations will be undertaken in 2016. Commission Vice Chairman Steve Najjar mentioned that the CC had purchased the Wolf Creek lot and requested Mr. Turner complete a proposal for forest management planning activities on this parcel at next quarterly meeting.

Mr. Turner introduced colleague Jason McGraw to discuss a proposed forest opening maintenance plan and to further discuss a potential pollinator habitat enhancement project at the Eastman field. Mr. McGraw presented a \$5,500 quote from Fire Management Services, Inc. to conduct a proscribed burn at the newly re-opened field at the south end of the Eastman. Mr. Najjar informed the commission that he does part time work for Fire Management Services and would therefore recuse himself from any decision making proceedings regarding the proposed work. Mr. Najjar commented that to keep the field open it would have to be hit every 2 to 3 years. The field is an 11-acre opening in the forest. The proscribed burn would be conducted in the spring during the burn window, at a time dictated by site conditions. The burn boss would contact the Weare Fire Department and make all necessary burn arrangements including notifications. No volunteer labor is necessary and bystanders would be kept to a minimum. The commission discussed other options to keep the field open such as bronto mowing but given the number of stumps remaining, this approach would be more expensive than burning. Some dozer work to establish a perimeter fire break may be warranted.

Mr. McGraw also renewed discussion of a proposal to establish an area of prime habitat for pollinators within the Eastman field. Bee, butterfly, etc. habitat is quite limited in our town. In order to establish a stable wildflower patch, the seeding area would need to be freed of competing vegetation. The options to prepare the ground for wildflower seeding include a three-application program of treatment with an herbicide (glyphosate/Roundup) or cover with black plastic through a growing season. Either could be effective and cost estimates are comparable. Plastic sheeting maintenance can be difficult and generates a waste material while herbicides involve application of an unnatural chemical to the ground surface. Commissioners present indicated their preference for the glyphosate treatment. Mr. Fulton reminded the commission that member Lisa Grolljahn had previously expressed that she would not advocate for the herbicide approach. Tom Jones of the Piscataquog Land Conservancy was present and Mr. Fulton asked

if the PLC had concerns with the use of herbicides on land under conservation easement. Mr. Jones was not aware of any preclusion of such. Easement language would probably be silent on the issue. Mr. Jones will be sure PLC is aware of the commission's pollinator project and herbicide application consideration. Mr. Turner summarized the wildlife management field opening history and suggested that approximately 3 acres of the field may be well-suited for pollinator habitat establishment. Estimated project cost would be approximately \$1,500 for a quarter acre. The commission would rely on UNH Cooperative Extension expertise for the project science and layout assistance. Herbicide application could be conducted by MTL. Due to scheduling concerns, the commission decided to move ahead and address the field maintenance proposal and to hold off regarding pollinator project approval until the full commission is able to assemble, probably at the February meeting.

Mr. Bolton **motioned** and member Jeff Jackson seconded the motion to approve expenditure of \$5,500 from the Town Forest Account forest maintenance allowance on the 2016 warrant (or from the Conservation Fund if the warrant does not pass) for retention of Fire Management Services to conduct the proscribed burn at the Eastman field as proposed. Mr. Fulton called the vote and the **motion passed** with misters Bolton, Jackson, and Fulton approved. Mr. Najjar did not vote as he had previously recused himself.

2. Tom Jones of the Piscataquog Land Conservancy came before the commission to re-advocate for commission approval of \$3,500 toward the Martin Family Trust easement purchase. Mr. Jones handed out an aerial photograph and summarized the easement proceedings to date. He stated that the commission had approved the funding in May 2015 with a condition that snowmobiles be allowed. Mr. Bolton stated that his concern at the time and currently is that public funds not be expended on land projects that preclude snowmobiles outright. The May 2015 minutes didn't quite capture his concern. He stated that he does not ask that snowmobiles be allowed but that they not be disallowed, stressing that landowner approval is always a prerequisite. Mr. Bolton said that he is personally opposed to the expenditure of public funds on this project due to a number of site-specific conditions, but he does not intend to throw a wrench in the works. He would just like the easement language to reflect that snowmobile use would be left up to the landowner. Mr. Bolton said that this issue is why he joined the commission. Mr. Najjar commented that he would still like to see the specific easement language before approving or re-approving conservation funds toward the project. Mr. Jones stated that the intent was to use the easement language from the abutting easement but given what he had heard tonight, PLC may want to consider a stand-alone easement for this project. Mr. Bolton commented that he has no real concern for the near future, his concern is longer term and he feels that organized motor-travelers are good conservation partners and actually can assist and be an advantage to landowners. Out-right preclusion in perpetuity removes potential access to conservation lands for half of the town (the riders). Mr. Jones concluded that since the rush to close by the end of 2015 didn't pan out, there is more time to iron out easement details and reconsider options. He will take the commission's concerns back to the landowner. Stay tuned.
3. Mr. Najjar **motioned** and Mr. Bolton seconded the motion to approve the December 9, 2015 minutes. Mistres Najjar, Bolton, and Fulton voted in favor and Mr. Jackson abstained. The **motion passed**.
4. Mister Fulton addressed an email from Steve Walker of the LCIP program regarding monitoring reports. Mr. Najjar said he had sent in one and the other was for a property usually monitored by Tom Carr, former commission chairman. Mr. Fulton indicated he would check with Mr. Carr.
5. Mr. Fulton mentioned an email from the Stoddard Conservation Commission requesting support of their opposition to Fish and Game Department's consideration of opening a hunting season for Bobcat. Mr. Najjar mentioned that he is generally ok with Fish and Game's management approach. He understood that they were in rulemaking and may be proposing 50 permits. Mr. Bolton mentioned that they are commonly seen but suffer during hard winters. Mr. Fulton said he appreciated wild cats but didn't have issue with the

consideration of re-opening a season. The commission was generally not in favor of Stoddard's proposed course of action.

6. Mr. Fulton mentioned that NH Association of Conservation Commission dues would be \$363 in 2016.
7. Mr. Fulton mentioned receipt of a bank statement indicating a balance of \$1,149.99 in the commission's unrestricted grant account.
8. Mr. Fulton asked the commissioners whether they had additional items for consideration. Mr. Bolton mentioned that he appreciated that the Poor Farm post-harvest trail cleanup was done at a very reasonable price. Mr. Bolton then informed the commission that though he was interested in the Planning Board's reconsideration of easements on open space generated during cluster subdivision development, he chose not to vote on the commission's recommendation to the PB because he is involved with a conservancy that potentially holds easements on conservation lands. The Weare Winter Wanderers Land Conservation Committee is an offshoot of the snowmobile club and holds access easements and looks to be able to acquire additional easements, intended for recreation only. The WWW Conservation Committee has no aspiration to take anything here for that. In more general easement/open space discussion, Mr. Bolton asked about the feasibility of assessing a monitoring impact fee that could be used to hire a monitoring contractor. With the commission's inability to adequately marshal volunteer monitors, it seems an idea worthy of further consideration with the PB.
9. Mr. Fulton mentioned a non-agenda item for the commission to consider. He had discovered in late December that a beaver dam on conservation property in north Weare had been removed and replaced approximately 15 feet upstream. The dam had been removed in its entirety, a fallen tree chain sawed, and rocks pulled from the nearby surrounds and placed on the new dam. Mr. Fulton noted that in years past someone had attempted to cut an opening in the dam to drain the pond without success. It appears that the work very significant labor in the wetlands and was likely undertaken to facilitate crossing the brook on the conservation property, horse hoof prints and wheeled tracks were noted. The dam is proximal to Hemlock Drive. Mr. Fulton said he had done some deed and plan research and confirmed that the dam was clearly on conservation property (map 401/lot 118). Mr. Najjar mentioned that beaver dam management options exist for landowners, but since this was done on conservation land the activity was illegal. Even if done on owned property, he mentioned that the work described would require a state DES Wetlands Bureau dredge and fill permit. He also suggested checking with conservation officer Delayne Brown regarding the activity. Misters Bolton and Jackson suggested that a letter to nearby landowners might serve to serve notice to those in the neighborhood who might have interest in easier interior access across the conservation parcel.

Mr. Najjar motioned and Mr. Bolton seconded, all voted in favor, and meeting adjourned at 9:34 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrew Fulton (WCC Chair)