



CONSERVATION COMMISSION
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MINUTES OF THE CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Wednesday, January 13, 2021 – 7:00 p.m. – Virtual via Zoom

Members Present: Bill Bilodeau, Laura Byergo, Joe Fedora, Brad Lajoie, Joe Russell, Lloyd Ziel

Members Absent: Rich Collins

Also Present: Jack Shephard, Building Inspector

Chair Byergo opened the Conservation Commission meeting at 7:08 p.m. A roll call was taken; it was announced a quorum was present and the meeting was being held virtually through Zoom and recorded by audio. A checklist to ensure meetings are compliant with the Right-to-Know Law during the State of Emergency was read into the record by Chair Byergo. Attendance was taken by roll call: B. Bilodeau – present, L. Byergo – present, J. Fedora - present, J. Russell – present, L. Ziel - present.

1. FEMA Maps

J. Shephard was scheduled to discuss FEMA maps with the Conservation Commission at the December 2020 meeting and was unable to attend. He was not on the January 2021 agenda. L. Byergo suggested he be on the agenda for the February 2021 meeting.

2. Approval of Minutes

Approval of December 2020 minutes was continued.

MOTION: B. Bilodeau moved to approve the minutes of the October 2020 meeting. Second – B. Lajoie; roll call vote: B. Bilodeau – yes, J. Fedora – yes, B. Lajoie – yes, J. Russell – yes, L. Ziel -yes, L. Byergo – abstain. Five in favor, one abstained (L. Byergo). MOTION CARRIED

MOTION: J. Fedora moved to approve the minutes of the November 2020 meeting. Second – J. Russell; roll call vote: B. Bilodeau – abstain, J. Fedora – yes, B. Lajoie – yes, J. Russell – yes, L. Ziel -yes, L. Byergo – yes. Five in favor, one abstained (B. Bilodeau). MOTION CARRIED

L. Byergo asked members to consider doing the Conservation Commission minutes. The benefit would be that they do not have to be verbatim. L. Byergo would like to do minutes that follow the agenda, highlight key points in the discussion, and any decisions. She added that she could not do the minutes and be the chairman at the same time. L. Ziel stated that taking notes and being an active participant in a meeting is difficult. B. Lajoie stated that Zoom also has voice to text capabilities. B. Lajoie will follow-up with the Administrative Assistant.

3. Old Business: Annual Report Draft

A draft for the Annual Town Report was emailed to members prior to the meeting. A vote was not needed for the report. It is due to the Town before the end of the month. Unable to meet for a photo,

members were asked to submit a small photo of themselves in their favorite outdoor setting to L. Byergo to be included in the Town Report. L. Byergo would like photos within a week.

4. Article XXVI: Residential Open-Space Conservation Subdivision Development Ordinance

Some Conservation Commission members participated in the Planning Board public hearing for zoning amendments. The Town Planner was not at that meeting and there was some confusion with the Open-Space Ordinance and the Conservation Commission's request that was made in writing. The Planning Board thought they had agreed to L. Byergo's request at a previous meeting. L. Byergo had emailed the Planning Board with her concerns prior to the public hearing.

Peter Steckler, The Nature Conservancy, made a presentation to the Planning Board regarding wildlife corridors at their public hearing. He addressed how the Connect the Coast report was developed as well as the coordination between The Nature Conservancy, Fish and Game, federal agencies, other conservation-oriented NGO's, and stakeholders. This was a good opportunity to educate the Planning Board and the public.

L. Byergo voiced the Conservation Commission's concerns at the Planning Board work session. She stated that it was clear to her at that meeting that the Planning Board was unanimous in not adding 'wildlife corridors' to the Applicability section of Article XXVI at this time. The Planning Board was clear they felt the Conservation Commission needed to do more to educate the public about wildlife corridors. She has spoken to P. Steckler about protecting the wildlife corridors. Protecting the corridors can be done a number of ways including putting easements on them and not building on or buying them. Many property owners may not be aware their property is a wildlife corridor and what that means.

L. Byergo stated it was the Conservation Commission's responsibility to do more to education Greenland residents. She noted that the Planning Board was willing to work with the Conservation Commission as well as The Nature Conservancy and P. Steckler. He is willing to meet with any Boards or community groups in Town.

B. Lajoie was concerned about developers building on wildlife corridors. He felt P. Steckler made a good case that development should be around, and not through, so corridors are not cut off and killing migration of wildlife. Responding a question from L. Ziel, L. Byergo stated that she was asked by the Planning Board if the Conservation Commission had contacted property owners about their property being a wildlife corridor. She told them property owners had not been contacted. She did not think the Conservation Commission should contact property owners. That would be a community education project. She told the Planning Board the Conservation Commission does not have a large budget; other organizations within the State have large education budgets. The Planning Board would like the Conservation Commission to educate residents about the wildlife corridors in Town.

J. Fedora stated the Planning Board seemed to agree that contacting property owners might not be possible. They seemed receptive to community education. J. Fedora felt it was a challenging meeting. He had asked the Planning Board "what was the downside", referring to including wildlife corridors in the applicability section of the ordinance. J. Fedora stated that it would not have been productive to continue to go back and forth. The Planning Board recognizes the importance of wildlife corridors and is willing to work with the Conservation Commission.

L. Byergo noted it was important to realize that Planning Boards and Conservation Commissions work closely with each other and can do a lot to protect the natural resources. The Conservation

DRAFT: SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Commission's role is advisory and that needs to be exercised; the Conservation Commission needs to speak up for the natural resources in Town.

P. Steckler told L. Byergo that he is interested in speaking to the Conservation Commission. February or March may be a good time. Handouts could be given out in conjunction with the seedlings program or at the Transfer Station regarding wildlife corridors. The Nature Conservancy has presentations that are pre-recorded with guided questions; P. Steckler will be reviewing those with L. Byergo. P. Steckler will contact the UNH department that helped with the Connect the Coast report to develop a brochure about wildlife and wildlife corridors.

5. Mr. and Mrs. Wally Berg's Conservation Easement

The Berg's have a nine-acre parcel adjacent to I-95, on two water streams and a wildlife corridor. A stream goes through one of the few major culverts on I-95. The Board of Selectmen asked the Conservation Commission to provide comments about the parcel and if it was worth the Town being the third party to hold the easement. The Town is reluctant to accept easements due to the difficulty in monitoring them. The Conservation Commission is active in monitoring and have two new members this year.

L. Byergo submitted comments stating that it made sense to accept the easement; Southeast Land Trust was also supportive and felt it was a good piece of land for a conservation easement. L. Byergo was out of Town when the Selectmen discussed accepting the easement and did not accept the easement. L. Byergo has been meeting with the Berg's and feels the Conservation Commission should make another attempt to have the easement accepted by the Town. The Berg's lawyer has reviewed the RSA for Conservation Commissions. Instead of the Berg's giving the easement to the Town, they can give the easement to the Conservation Commission. That would be an additional monitoring responsibility for the Conservation Commission.

The Berg's, their lawyer, Southeast Land Trust, and L. Byergo will meet within the next few days for further discussion. L. Byergo noted there was a barn on part of the Berg property that was included in the easement. South East Land Trust stated that a barn creates a liability due to what could be stored there. The Town did not like the barn included in the easement. South East Land Trust also recommended there be a dedicated accessway for easement monitoring. They are going to draft the document with the Berg's and then meet with the Selectmen for reconsideration.

J. Fedora questioned why the Selectmen would be more inclined to accept a revised version of the easement. L. Byergo stated that looking over the long term, the Selectmen in the past have said the easements were land management and a burden on the Town. An easement does not give the land away, the individual still owns the land and has responsibility; it is still private property. The third party involved monitors it to make sure the terms are being honored and that a future owner does not forget about the easement and try to build on the land. The easement also becomes part of the deed.

There are conservation easements on Falls Way, which is across I-95 from the Berg's property. There is every reason for the Selectmen to accept the Berg's easement. The Berg's are concerned that after they die, the property will not be protected and will be developed. B. Lajoie noted the property is in the middle of a wildlife corridor.

6. Greenland Natural Resources Inventory and Future Land Use

There is a State process for doing a natural resources inventory. Greenland has an inventory which was developed in 2008 and 2009 and included management plans for the conservation areas in Town; it was written by Ellen Snyder. Amanda Stone met with the Conservation Commission a couple of years ago and showed them the updated flood maps from UNH. A. Stone recommended Greenland's natural resources inventory be updated. That will be a community process. The last time it was done, Rockingham County Conservation Commission mediated the process. In addition to the amount of work, there is a cost involved.

L. Byergo has been talking to A. Stone about the process: what was involved, who would help, the cost, and if a grant and/or funding was available. According to P. Steckler, the State is doing a 2021 update to their wildlife action plan; public outreach will need to be done as part of that update. If Greenland can update its inventory, the Conservation Commission will have the best platform to discuss the wildlife corridors in the community process.

Greenland's Natural Resources Inventory is online. It is the best introduction to Greenland's resources as well as the Connect the Coast report.

7. Greenland's 300th Anniversary Celebration

The 300th Anniversary Celebration would be a good opportunity to host an event about Greenland's natural resources. L. Ziel updated members that there is a schedule of events from June 12 through September 18, 2021. There are 'tent events' scheduled from August 27th through August 30th. L. Byergo suggested that if this were a normal year, the trail could be officially opened, and a walk could be done.

L. Byergo suggested doing a Presentation of Appreciation from the Conservation Commission, on behalf of the Town of Greenland, to residents who have set aside land in an easement that is protected from development and protects the waters and wildlife. This could be done as part of the 300th Anniversary Celebration.

8. ARM Grant

Discussion of the ARM Grant was continued to a future meeting.

9. Other Business

J. Shephard commented that he found the meeting very educational and was conservation 'all the way'.

10. Adjournment

MOTION: B. Bilodeau moved to adjourn at 8:15 p.m. Second – B. Lajoie; roll call vote: B. Bilodeau – yes, L. Byergo – yes, J. Fedora - yes, B. Lajoie – yes, J. Russell – yes, L. Ziel – yes. All in favor. MOTION CARRIED

L. Byergo reminded members to review the Annual Town Report and get back to her.

NEXT MEETING

Wednesday, February 10, 2021 – 7:00 p.m., Zoom

Submitted By: Charlotte Hussey, Administrative Assistant