



CONSERVATION COMMISSION
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MINUTES OF THE CONSERVATION COMMISSION

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

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

Late Arrival: Rich Collins

Also Present: Courtney Johnson

Chair Byergo opened the Conservation Commission meeting at 7:03 p.m. 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, B. Lajoie – present, J. Russell – present, L. Ziel - present.

1. Approval of Minutes

Minutes from the meeting on Wednesday, January 13, 2021 were corrected to include B. Lajoie as present (attendance by roll call).

MOTION: J. Fedora moved to approve the minutes of Wednesday, January 13, 2021 as amended. Second – B. Bilodeau; roll call vote: B. Bilodeau – yes, L. Byergo – yes, J. Fedora - yes, B. Lajoie – yes, J. Russell – yes, L. Ziel - yes.

2. Joint Conservation Commission Meeting

On Tuesday, January 26, 2021, L. Byergo and J. Fedora participated in a quarterly joint conservation meeting with Stratham, Exeter, Portsmouth, Rye, Greenland, and Hampton. J. Fedora stated he has found the meetings very informative, adding he would be happy to rotate meetings with other members.

Three topics were discussed: (1) How does each Commission deal with after-the-fact permit situations? The consensus of attendees was if someone was seeking approval for something that had already been done, the situation should be scrutinized carefully. Others charge higher fees for after-the-fact permits. Fines can also be levied. (2) How to deal with wetland buffer situations in subdivisions. (3) How do Commissions communicate with other Town officials and/or Boards? Some Commissions have a representative from another Board as a member.

L. Byergo added that the wetland protection discussion referred to looking at protecting wetlands at an early stage when a parcel is being subdivided, by making sure the lot sizes are enough to accommodate a building and the probability of a later deck add-on without encroaching on the buffers. The buffers can be protected while in the subdivision stage. J. Fedora added that the Conservation Commission could do more to inform new homeowners who may be unaware of the easement conditions on their

property as well as interfacing with the community when possible on specific properties. It was also suggested engaging with property owners when easement monitoring was done as another way of increasing understanding about easements and what the Conservation Commission does.

J. Fedora added there was a discussion regarding communication between Boards. L. Byergo continued that it does not hurt to have a member of another Board as a representative, alternate or liaison on the Conservation Commission or vice versa. Getting the communication flowing between Boards would be positive. L. Byergo suggested members could attend other Board meetings via Zoom, particularly the Planning Board.

B. Bilodeau questioned if a resident would need a permit from the Building Inspector and should it be stopped at that level. He asked if the Conservation Commission should have access to all building permits issued by the Town and suggested they might want to look into that. L. Byergo stated they could ask to see the permits or attend when the Planning Board was dealing with a subdivision.

B. Lajoie questioned how to set up public outreach programs and what steps should be taken so it was effective. L. Ziel responded the Conservation Commission would need to know what topics they wanted to present to the community and the available tools to reach residents. A strategy for reaching the public would need to be created. Items that may be of interest would be the trails and the watershed. L. Ziel added that a lot of people in Town do not know what the Conservation Commission does and the Town's responsibility to conservation. L. Byergo stated it was a great idea and great start.

3. Greenland Natural Resource Inventory and Future Land Use

L. Byergo and B. Lajoie participated in a Zoom meeting with Amanda Stone, UNH Cooperative Extension – Natural Resources and Land Conservation, to discuss Greenland's Natural Resources Inventory. A. Stone had attended a Conservation Commission meeting last year and provided updated wildlife and flood storage maps.

Part of the Conservation Commission's responsibility is to catalog Greenland's natural resources and keep it up to date. The Town's current inventory is approximately 10 years old. The process of updating the inventory helps to incorporate the research being done at UNH or at the State level. A. Stone recommended making the Natural Resource Inventory a working document. *R. Collins joined the meeting via Zoom.* A. Stone suggested incorporating the inventory as part of the Town's Master Plan; towns are supposed to have a natural resources chapter in their Master Plan. There is not currently a natural resources chapter in the Town's Master Plan.

L. Byergo noted updating the Natural Resources Inventory will be a huge job. A. Stone suggested a contractor may have to be hired to put the research into draft form, which is less expensive. A more expensive way would be to do a discussion through community outreach. The Planning Board and Selectmen should also be involved.

The approximate cost would be between \$3,000 and \$10,000 to update the Natural Resources Inventory. Funds may be available through the Conservation Capital Reserve Fund, which is different from the warrant article. The Conservation CRF is to be used for land procurement as well as the planning of strategic land procurement.

J. Fedora questioned if the cost to update the Natural Resources Inventory was a one-time fee or if updates would be done on a continuous basis. L. Byergo responded that it would not be just a catalog

of the resources; management plans and recommendations for action would also be included. She would like to look at the existing Natural Resources Inventory to see if all the previous recommendations have been implemented. Management plans and recommendations for action are what makes the inventory a living document and helps drive annual agendas.

L. Byergo discussed PREP (Piscataqua Region Estuary Partnership) with members. PREP is primarily a research body that receives federal funding. They work closely with UNH, the Great Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, NH Fish & Game, and others. They release an annual report on the State of the Estuary which tracks the health of Great Bay. Several years ago, they prepared a guide for each town in New Hampshire providing guidance to organizations on what could be done to improve their impact on the Bay and help set agendas.

PREP recently published their report for last year. The report includes new municipal recommendations. A representative of PREP may be able to attend a Conservation Commission meeting to discuss Greenland. PREP is water-quality based; their interest is in estuarine wildlife rather than land-based wildlife.

L. Byergo stated that Greenland's Natural Resources Inventory can bring all the recommendations together. L. Ziel noted this would be a great entry point for the Conservation Commission to enter into the marketing game.

4. Greenland's 300th Anniversary Celebration

L. Ziel updated members on the 300th Anniversary Celebration. Events are being scaled back due to COVID and budgetary constraints. The Committee is looking at the weekend of September 18, 2021 as a possible date to schedule celebration events. L. Ziel, also a member of the 300th Anniversary Committee, proposed a trail walk/promotion on that weekend. J. Russell suggested a virtual trail walk; L. Ziel added a virtual trail walk could be on the Town website.

5. Conservation Commission By-Laws

The Greenland Conservation Commission does not have by-laws. J. Russell prepared a draft of by-laws for review by members. He researched by-laws through the NH Association of Conservation Commissions as well as other towns for what should be included. J. Russell's proposed by-laws include what the Conservation Commission should be doing. L. Byergo noted the by-laws may have to be passed by the Town. The by-laws done by the Cemetery Trustees had to be approved on a warrant at Town Meeting.

Further discussion and review were continued to the next meeting.

6. Trail Map

R. Collins and C. Johnson fixed the trail map to show Liberty Hill Lane. They also prepared a draft two-page brochure for members to review. The brochure included the trail map and other helpful information. They are considering shrinking the size of the trail map and including information about how the estuary works and its importance to the grand eco-system. R. Collins and C. Johnson wanted the brochure to be recreational and educational.

DRAFT: SUBJECT TO CHANGE

L. Byergo hoped to put a trail map at the beginning of the trail at Liberty Hill. It would be on a platform similar to the one at Rolston Park that will be a permanent presence. L. Byergo suggested the brochure and any other promotions could be given out during the 300th Anniversary. She would like to have the brochure available this summer.

Further discussion was continued to the March meeting.

7. Other Business

Rockingham County Conservation Commission: L. Ziel told members he attended a Rockingham County Conservation Commission meeting. There are currently two members of the RCCC who are working across the State to help farmers mitigate erosion and soil loss, etc. The RCCC would like to make a presentation to the Greenland Conservation Commission about supporting their efforts and ways to help them with their fundraising. Across the State they are trying to raise \$40,000 to hire an additional person (there would be a total of three people for the entire State).

March Meeting: Jack Shephard, Building Inspector/Code Enforcement Officer, will attend the March meeting. L. Byergo suggested a meeting after March for the RCC.

There will be continued discussion and review of the brochure and the Conservation Commission By-Laws as well as a presentation by J. Shephard. In addition, there will be a discussion about the Berg Easement.

Berg Easement: The Berg's have signed an updated easement. L. Byergo will have that available to the Conservation Commission at the March meeting for a formal vote which would mean taking on a new monitoring responsibility. If approved by the Conservation Commission, L. Byergo will then take the easement to the Board of Selectmen. The Town cannot accept another conservation easement without Board of Selectmen approval. B. Lajoie clarified that the land will remain the Berg's private property and the Town would assume monitoring responsibilities. L. Byergo stated that was correct; the Berg's were putting a conservation easement on approximately nine acres of their land. It will be a deed restriction that goes with the land if it changes hands and prevents development.

Bobcats: J. Fedora noted that two bobcats have been seen in the Winnicut Road/Meaghan Way area. One is a large yellowish bobcat, the other is grayish. They appear to be interested in the muskrat in Thompson Brook.

8. Adjournment

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

NEXT MEETING

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

Submitted By: Charlotte Hussey, Administrative Assistant