



CONSERVATION COMMISSION
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MINUTES OF THE CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Wednesday, May 11, 2022 – 6:30 p.m. – Town Hall Conference Room

Members Present: Kathleen Babin-Johnson, Bill Bilodeau, Laura Byergo, Joe Fedora, Lloyd Ziel

Members Absent: Chip Hussey, Brad Lajoie

The Right-to-Know Law was reviewed.

L. Ziel opened the Conservation Commission meeting at 6:30 p.m. Attendance was taken and it was announced a quorum was present and the meeting was being recorded and live-streamed.

1. Level Setting

L. Ziel stated members should try to keep their conversations on point and moving forward.

2. Old Business

a. Budget: L. Byergo and L. Ziel have met and discussed the budget.

b. Town Field Tank Update: B. Bilodeau updated members that he and C. Hussey have checked the tanks. C. Hussey felt equipment would be needed to remove the tanks and other items. B. Bilodeau thought it may be the Town's responsibility. The Town is aware of the tanks; B. Bilodeau has spoken to the Town Administrator. L. Byergo stated it was brought to the Town's attention a couple of years ago. It is a pretty area of Town land that the Conservation Commission monitors; there is not a conservation easement on the land. There is a 500-gallon tank as well as other tanks on the property. Responding to B. Bilodeau, L. Byergo explained that the contents of the tanks are unknown or if the ground has been contaminated. Someone needs to determine if there is contamination and what needs to be done. The Conservation Commission wants to clean up any contamination. The State can do it but will charge the Town, which will be expensive but will help clean up the environment. L. Byergo suggested contacting DES; there may be a grant available to help towns with environmental clean-up if the town contributes. She agreed it was the Town's responsibility. However, if there is funding and it can be done, L. Byergo suggested starting the project or talk to the Board of Selectmen. B. Bilodeau asked if they wanted the use Conservation Commission funding; L. Byergo responded it was all Town funding. B. Bilodeau said that the Town Administrator talked about capping it and taking it to the dump, which would be costly to have someone cut up the tanks. A soil scientist may be needed to check for contamination. B. Bilodeau will speak with the Town Administrator about how to move forward. C. Hussey stated that the tanks appear to be empty. There is also a VW beetle. Based on information he has received, it may be Cemetery property.

c. Trail Cams Update: The cost for the trail cams was \$365. J. Fedora corrected that was the cost of the cameras; total cost was approximately \$520, which included the batteries, SD cards, and the theft

cables. Not included in those figures is the subscription to transmit pictures through the cell towers to a phone (eliminates the need to physically remove the SD cards for the pictures). *C. Hussey joined the meeting by phone.* J. Fedora continued that the annual subscription cost is \$120 for one camera and \$96 for the second. The total cost of two cameras would be around \$700. L. Byergo noted there would be a recurring cost of \$200 per year (batteries and subscriptions). There should be a better program for the purpose of the trail cam. Her original thought was to monitor specific areas (wildlife corridor). L. Ziel responded that B. Lajoie planned to place the cameras in specific locations. L. Byergo stated one camera was to be placed on the Berg property to monitor the wildlife corridor. She questioned the second camera and its location. It should be discussed further if there was going to be an ongoing cost. L. Ziel noted that when it was discussed, the plan was for a camera to be placed at the Berg easement; B. Lajoie had suggested two cameras be purchased. J. Fedora suggested one camera to start and then purchase a second at a later time. The cost for one camera would be approximately \$322. L. Byergo noted funds would have to come from the warrant article; cameras are not included in the budget.

MOTION: J. Fedora moved to purchase the camera at the price quoted by Brad Lajoie, totaling \$335 or thereabouts, inclusive of the first-year subscription. Second – L. Byergo; all in favor. MOTION CARRIED

- d. Van Etten Drive: J. Fedora and C. Hussey looked at the debris on Liberty Hill/Van Etten Drive with Knowles Tree Service. C. Hussey received a range quote from Knowles Tree Service (copy on file) and presented it to the Board of Selectmen at their meeting on Monday, May 09th, requesting to use the remaining bond of \$2,700 for clean-up. The quote from Knowles Tree Service ranges from \$2,400 to \$3,600, depending on the amount of work. The Selectmen have recommended that the Planning Board have input. It will go back to the Selectmen at their meeting on Monday, May 23rd. C. Hussey recommended spending \$1,000 to finish cleaning up the trail. L. Byergo stated the Conservation Commission should wait to spend the money until the Selectmen approve using the bond. C. Hussey responded that he would like to have it done before the thicker foliage. The Selectmen were given a list of debris on the site. A mulcher will be used to open up a trail to remove debris. L. Ziel questioned the cost and asked if it would be less if they waited until fall. C. Hussey responded the problem in the fall would be hunters in the woods. Responding to a question from L. Byergo, C. Hussey stated he did not know the length of the opening: there are multiple targets between the existing trail and the old campground. If the job can be done in one day, it would cost \$2,400. J. Fedora's main concern was the transmission and refrigerator on the property; the other items were small enough to be carried out by hand.

MOTION: C. Hussey moved to expend an additional \$1,000 from the Conservation Commission warrant article, if needed, for clean-up at Liberty Hill/Van Etten Drive contingent upon Board of Selectmen approval to use the remaining bond. Second – B. Bilodeau; four in favor, two opposed (L. Byergo, L. Ziel). MOTION CARRIED

C. Hussey and B. Lajoie will work on the project. If the path were done in the summer, C. Hussey expected it to be there in early winter to remove the debris. C. Hussey stated that the Town truck and tractor would be available to remove debris and haul to the Transfer Station. *C. Hussey left the meeting.*

L. Byergo briefly discussed an issue that occurred several years ago when the trail was being built. She was concerned that the Chairman may be unaware of what members were doing and when it was being done. L. Byergo stated that in the past she had gone to Board of Selectmen meetings and reported back to the Conservation Commission. L. Ziel stated the Conservation Commission should know if a member is going to represent them at another Board.

- e. Spring Outreach: Great Bay Reserve Presentation: J. Fedora reported that he has reached out to Peter Steckler and has not heard back. J. Fedora has not spoken with Great Bay Reserve; he wanted to hear from P. Steckler first about his time preference. L. Byergo told J. Fedora she was in the process of talking to P. Steckler and Dwayne Hyde about a community outreach project at the Library. J. Fedora has spoken to Chris Peter and Lynn Vaccaro, Coastal Training Coordinator, and they are interested in working with the Conservation Commission to facilitate an outreach program about the Emery Farm as well as the objective of a tide post at that location and rising sea levels. L. Vaccaro can attend a Conservation Commission meeting to discuss the details.

L. Byergo has received three dates from the Library for a possible presentation by P. Steckler about wildlife corridors and D. Hyde regarding Southeast Land Trust and their programs. The dates are: Friday, June 03rd, Tuesday, June 07th, and Tuesday, June 14th. They will contact L. Byergo with their preferred dates. J. Fedora will contact Great Bay Reserve now that he knows the dates. The Great Bay project could be done in late summer or early fall.
- f. Summer Intern: L. Byergo and L. Ziel have discussed the summer intern. L. Byergo stated there was \$1,000 added to the Conservation Commission budget for the summer intern. A possible name has been received but follow-up from the Conservation Commission is needed. A Conservation Commission member will need to be available to work with the intern to do easement monitoring. Reports have been done on nine properties listed in the Natural Resources Inventory that are monitored. L. Byergo explained the time requirement and process for working with the intern. K. Babin-Johnson will reach out to Jennifer Andrews, UNH. L. Byergo stated if a member would do the selection process, she would be willing to get the intern started on the monitoring. K. Babin-Johnson will help with the selection process. K. Babin-Johnson and L. Byergo will meet for further discussion.
- g. Natural Resources Inventory: Several members have reviewed the NRI. L. Byergo has received a quote from the Rockingham Planning Commission (RPC) and is aware of several others that can be contacted. L. Byergo will take the lead on this project. J. Fedora asked if building off an existing database would lower the cost. L. Byergo stated that RPC is aware there is an existing NRI. L. Ziel noted there are things in the NRI the Conservation Commission should do.
- h. Falls Way Town Easement: L. Byergo stated there are dozens of easement boundaries in Falls Way. She explained that an easement boundary, in most cases, is a piece of property. In Falls Ways there are boundaries on private property. It is more difficult to trace the easement lines using the onX trail tracking/property line tracking tool. The easements need to be renewed using the Conservation Commission decals. There is a property in Falls Way where some extensive clearing has been done. A survey will need to be done for the exact location of the easement line. L. Byergo stated the encumbered funds from the last warrant article could be used to have the survey done. B. Bilodeau questioned if it was the Town's responsibility or the Conservation Commission's. L. Byergo responded it depended on how members viewed the Conservation Commission's role. When asked if the Conservation Commission had funding available, L. Byergo explained there was \$17,000 in the three-year warrant article and the upcoming expenses. This project is in line with easement monitoring. She agreed with C. Hussey about using the bond for Van Etten Drive. They should try to get a grant to remove the tanks. L. Byergo anticipates the cost will be in the \$2,000 range to survey one piece of property. Responding to a question from B. Bilodeau, L. Byergo stated that if the property owner has cleared land into the easement, the enforcement is done by the Town; the Conservation Commission is not an enforcement body. L. Byergo and K. Babin-Johnson will take the lead on this project.

DRAFT: SUBJECT TO CHANGE

- i. Thompson Brook Trail: Discussed earlier.
- j. Portsmouth Climate Change Update: K. Babin-Johnson updated members on the climate change symposium and reviewed the questions each participating town had to answer. Temperatures in the Gulf of Maine are rising more quickly than other areas. Steve Smith, Board of Selectmen Chairman, reported for Greenland. There will be climate change symposiums periodically throughout the year. L. Byergo clarified that the goal was to educate the public for private action; K. Babin-Johnson agreed. J. Fedora asked if Portsmouth discussed partnering with Strawberry Banke about sea level/groundwater rise. There is an exhibit at Strawberry Banke showing what the effect on Portsmouth has been and will be moving forward. K. Babin-Johnson stated that the consortium will be trying to attract more individuals and meet on a regular basis. L. Byergo suggested it may be a decision by the Board of Selectmen on follow-up unless the Conservation Commission wanted to proactively lead Greenland's role. K. Babin-Johnson is on the mailing list. She thought it was great there was Selectmen representation and the Conservation Commission as well. It was educational to see what neighboring towns were doing.
- k. Rolston Park Stump Removal: Discussion was continued at C. Hussey's request.
- l. Planning Board Meeting Update: J. Fedora updated members that there is a major project at the Planning Board. There have been several meetings about the project. It will be going to the Conservation Commission at some point. Members were given information about the project. J. Fedora requested that members become familiar with the project before it comes to the Conservation Commission. L. Byergo distributed a summary guideline from the Ordinance for reviewing material such as the Tower Place development. L. Ziel noted that the information about the project was outdated and an update was expected within the next week. J. Fedora recommended looking at the last couple of Planning Board minutes for the project. There will be a Planning Board meeting on Thursday, May 19th.

3. New Business

There was no new Business to discuss.

4. Other Business

There was no other business to discuss.

5. Approval of Minutes

MOTION: B. Bilodeau moved to approve the minutes of Wednesday, April 13, 2022. Second – L. Byergo; three in favor, two abstained (L. Byergo, K. Babin-Johnson)

6. Adjournment

MOTION: B. Bilodeau moved to adjourn at 8:10 p.m. Second – K. Babin-Johnson; all in favor. MOTION CARRIED

NEXT MEETING

Wednesday, June 08, 2022 – 6:30 p.m., Town Hall Conference Room

Submitted By: Charlotte Hussey, Administrative Assistant