

MEETING MINUTES

ALBANY CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Tuesday, September 12, 2017. 6:00 pm

Members present: Rob Nadler, Cathy Ryan, Mike Stewart, Peter Carboni, Cort Hansen, And Alternates: Austen Bernier, Paul Brown. Public: Steve Knox.

Rob called the meeting to order at 6:21 pm.

Rob asked for comments or questions regarding the minutes for the 8/1/17 meeting. With no questions or comments, he asked for a motion to approve the minutes. A motion to approve the 8/1/17 meeting minutes was made and seconded. With a vote, the meeting minutes were approved 5-0.

Rob distributed a copy of the Agricultural Management Contract that has been drafted by Selectman Rick Highland in conjunction with Town Counsel and input from the town's insurance carrier Primex and he asked for comments or questions. The contract will need to be signed by both the Littlefield and Grandview farmers. Steve asked about winter cover crops for erosion control purposes. Rob said that the contract required farmers to use generally accepted agricultural practices and that practices that result in erosion or damages would result in termination. Farmers are required to meet or exceed the NH Department of Agriculture Best Management Practices and be in accordance with the USVLT's Conservation Easement. It was noted that bio solids are not permitted. Rob noted that the contract differences between Littlefield and Grandview farms differ only in the area under agreement for the respective farms. The seven year contract time was questioned by Cathy and Rob said this was in order that the farmers are able to be eligible for commercial loans or federal grant funding should they decide to apply for such. Rob asked for a motion to approve the contract and that he go forward and have the farmers sign their contracts. Peter moved the motion and Mike seconded the motion, with a vote the motion was approved 5-0.

Rob brought up the topic of the former campground property on the western edge of the Town Forest. He has been contacted by a local realtor who said the owners are interested in selling the property. The property fronts Rt. 112 on the south and has the Swift River as its northern boundary along the entire length and is about 15 acres in size. Rob said that he has contacted USVLT to see if they had any interest in helping acquire the parcel for addition to the town forest as the Town would be unable to raise the anticipated sale price for the property. USVLT indicated that although they are very interested in having that parcel put under conservation easement, the organization is committed to current projects that prevent them from acquiring any more property presently. Rob has also contact Chuck Henderson who works for US Senator Shaheen. Chuck suggested that Rob contact the Trust for Public Land (TPL). Steve indicated his support for the land acquisition and thought it would be a great addition to the Town Forest. Rob said that according to the realtor, the owners were flexible on the timeline for sale of the property and would be willing to wait if the town could find the funding. Rob suggested that perhaps USVLT or other TPL would like to have further discussion with the owners. Rob made a motion to that he move to coordinate a meeting between any interested organization and the landowners to see what could be arranged toward purchase of the property. With a second from Mike the motion was approved 5-0.

Rob brought up a topic from the 8/1 meeting regarding the Conservation Commission signing applications for expedited reviews by NH DES for wetland permits. Due to the smaller attendance at the last month's meeting he wanted to make every member aware of the issue. He emphasized that, for the purpose of making the permit process for a resident as simple and efficient as possible, it would be step in the right direction if either the Commission chair or vice-chair could sign off on these requests for expedited reviews. Rob explained the wetland permit process and the simple auxiliary role that the CC plays in the permit process. He noted that the CC signature only certifies that the CC is willing to expedite the application process for the applicant only, and

makes no determination on the issue of wetland impact as that is entirely the role of the DES. Peter thought that there could be potential problems with larger scale development projects that could become an issue, but for smaller residential applications chair or vice-chair signatures on expedited approvals would be appropriate. Rob felt that landowners are being slowed down and restricted due to the time requirement of waiting for monthly scheduled CC meetings and specially scheduled for the purposes of simply signing off on permit requests was a waste of taxpayer funds. Rob regretted that he did not have a copy of the DES application for review by the Commission but felt that next month he would provide a copy. This way members could review an application and see that by signing applications for expedited reviews the Commission was making no determination on the merits of the application, only the applicant's desire for an accelerated review process. Rob said that he would table this topic until next month when he could bring the application in for review by the members. No decision was made on processing future applications.

Cort noted that the Commission held a volunteer work day on August 12th and had 5 volunteers present. Mike Stewart brought his brush saw and mowed brush and blackberry brambles on the western end of the trail network; Davis Farm trail from Crossover Trail west to the Forest boundary, and Swift River Trail east to return to the Crossover trail. At the same time Rob, Cathy, Cort and resident volunteer Ron Ryan brushed the Davis Farm Trail from Crossover Trail east to the Wye Trail, and then Swift River Trail east to the Crossover Trail, to meet up with Mike. After the trail work session the group crossed over the Kancamagus Highway to review the progress that Mike and members of NEMBA have been making in developing a trail on the south side of the highway. Cort expressed his satisfaction in the work that had been accomplished and that the trails were greatly improved from the work completed that day. Cathy and Rob also mentioned that all the walkers that passed the work group that day had expressed their thanks and appreciation for the work that was being done.

Paul said that he was working on the history of the Town Forest for the web site and had been slowed by his recent absence from Albany. Cort said that he would like to establish some small interpretative signs around the trail work that might show off some of the local history or culture related to the area such as the Conway Lumber Company railroad wye, etc. Perhaps he said that the Conway Historical Society would be able to assist with some photographs or topics that could highlight the field area as well.

Rob asked for any other comments or questions. Steve Knox asked about the 10 year Strategic Plan. Rob said that he wanted to keep this topic on the agenda as for a continuing discussion as to future planning and that now the focus for the Commission may be potential funding alternatives for the 15 acre parcel on the west edge of the Forest property. Other topics could include trail access from Conway Village, etc.

With no further business to address, Rob asked for a motion to adjourn. Mike made a motion to adjourn and with a second from Cathy, a vote was taken and the meeting adjourned at 6:58 pm.

Cort Hansen, Conservation Commission Secretary.