

# MEETING MINUTES

## ALBANY CONSERVATION COMMISSION

**Tuesday, September 5th, 2023. 6:30 pm**

**Members present: Cathy Ryan, Cort Hansen, Sean Wadsworth, Mike Steward & Alternate: Jacob MacKenzie. Absent and excused; Kevin Tilton. Public: Tim Nolan - FLI, Jake and Sarah Davis – Davis Natural Produce.**

Cathy called the meeting to order at 6:35 pm. As this meeting was not officially noticed, Cathy said that there would be no votes taken and the meeting would be limited to meeting with the people who had previously made appointments with the Commission.

Cathy introduced Tim Nolan of Forest Land Improvement who is the forester the Commission uses to manage the Town Forest. Tim presented a draft proposal for a timber salvage operation off Bald Hill Road. His recent inspection there suggested that over 75%-80% of the oak trees and nearly 100% of the hemlock trees are dead due to the Spongy Moth infestation over 2021 & 2022. At the July meeting he has suggested a salvage operation to try to recover as much value from the dead or dying trees. Tim passed out a proposal that detailed his plan to salvage clear-cut within the Bald Hill parcel 18.7 acres in four different patches, the largest being 10 acres. The only trees that would remain would be healthy red maple, white birch and white pine. The objective would be to scarify the forest floor to allow seeds to find soil in order to rapidly reforest those patch cut areas. Tim has been in contact with the state forester and he had recommended reseeding with black birch seed for it regional suitability and rapid growth. He has located a source. He has been told that this project may be valuable as a study site for Spongy Moth infestation recovery. Since it has been such a wet summer Tim is looking at a winter time harvest. The dead wood will continue to lose value the longer it remains and as long as harvesting is done before next summer when the insect season begins the value should be stable only effected by the timber market.

Tim did not expect any problem with USVLT as the timber management plan is now out-of-date being required to update it every 10 years. As this is year 11 he felt that there would be no problem. And, he noted that the easement plan has a clause in it for disaster and insect infestation as well. He suggested that USVLT be notified of the town's intent to cut. He noted that the salvage cut would not impact the USVLT easement or resource protection goals. He also noted that the timber harvest tax is the responsibility of the logging company. There will be some cutting adjacent to Bald Hill Road along a short section. An application to the state will need to be made to cover the cutting beyond the maximum limit allowed adjacent to the road but that should be no problem as the trees are dead or dying. Tim did also note that the soil on the site is particularly well suited to receive new seed. He asked that the commission get back to him as soon as possible in order that he plan for the winter harvesting.

Jake and Sarah Davis from Davis Natural Produce, one of the two farmers using the Town Field for agriculture talked about their past season and their plans for 2024. Jake asked for a 5 year contract renewal. He noted that there have been some problems this summer with theft and vandalism with tools, fuel and batteries being stolen. This has never been a problem in the past. He asked that they be allowed to place a seasonal, ground-level storage container on the site to lock up valuables at night. This would be something that needs to have the approval of the USVLT. He also asked about providing some gravel to harden the access road at the field which has been very muddy this summer. He said that they could spread it once available. Also, the access road where it crosses USFS property has grown in and it is getting difficult to drive large trucks through there due to overhanging limbs and trees alongside the roadway. This question would need to have the approval of the USFS. It was

thought that Kevin Tilton could make inquires as to which person at the Saco District could answer this question.

Sarah spoke about their work with the Kennett Middle School and Kennett High School and their agricultural literacy program. Their goal is to help build a community network between the school, families and farmers to educate all about food insecurity, nutrition and health. Sarah said that food produced in the dedicated sections of their fields goes to low income families. They are looking for financial support to help promote this concept. The Davis's were congratulated on their community spirit and support for their school programs.

As this was not a formal meeting, all other business will wait for the October meeting on Tuesday the 3<sup>rd</sup> of October at 6:30 pm.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:35 pm.

Cort Hansen, Conservation Commission Secretary.