

MEETING MINUTES

ALBANY CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Tuesday, January 2nd 2024. 6:30 pm

Members present: Cathy Ryan, Cort Hansen, Kevin Tilton, Sean Wadsworth, Mike Steward, and Jacob MacKenzie, alternate. Public: Jake Davis, Paul Richardson, Joan Richardson, Jason Richardson

Cathy called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm.

Cathy asked for questions or comments on the minutes for the 12/5/23 meeting. With no comments or questions she called for a motion to approve those minutes and with a motion from Mike and a second from Sean the motion to approve the minutes of the 12/5/23 meeting was passed 5-0

Under new business, Cathy invited those present to discuss the problem issue of the wet road and any other topics they would like to address as farmers using the Albany Town Forest fields. Paul Richardson noted that due to the excessively wet summer weather the road access from the model airplane site going out into the field area has been chronically muddy and difficult all season long. In order to prevent further damage and to make access possible road improvements need to be made. Paul suggested that perhaps the NRCS may be able to assist with the cost of bringing in material and even engineering costs if required. He indicated that although there have been some personnel changes in the Lancaster office he will contact them to see if any assistance could be provided. Sean and Cathy suggested that perhaps Curtis Coleman could be consulted and see if he has some suggestions to remedy the problem. Sean said he would check with the USVLT for their approval.

Paul brought up the problem of theft from the farm site. Both farmers have lost equipment, materials and fuel from the field this past season. Paul was wondering if a storage container or small could be placed near the fields, suggesting a spot that would be below the line-of-site of Rt. 16. He was told that the USVLT has previously given authorization for such temporary storage units provided that they are removed at the end of each season. Sean said that the commission needs to amend the agricultural management plan to include the seasonal storage provision.

Discussion evolved around the extensive flooding event that happened on December 18th when near record flooding impacted the fields and valley area. Some materials were lost or displaced, although the soils were not adversely impacted. The condition of the hiking trails east of the Crossover Trail parking lot is not currently known. Limited damage and extensive flooding was the case on the western half of the Swift River Trail with some water still remaining as of 12/22.

Members who attended the recent meeting with the Albany BOS reviewed the discussion between the BOS and CC members. The BOS was not in favor of using the change in current use fees revenue to be placed in the Conservation Fund. However, they unanimously supported the revenue from the timber salvage cutting on the forest this winter to go to the Conservation Fund. A warrant article should be presented at Town meeting in March to that effect. Cathy discussed how to find additional money for the Conservation Fund.

Tim Nolan, the town forester, will prepare the timber landing area for this winter's salvage cutting which is expected to take place in late January once the ground freezes. Sean asked if we wanted Tim to include seeding post-harvest, with Black Birch seed which is a rapid growth hardwood species. It was agreed to have in include that in the salvage plan.

The members worked on language for the warrant article. Which will read:

“As provided in NH RSA 31:113, to see if the Town will vote to deposit the funds from any logging operation proceeds on the Albany Town Forest into the Albany Conservation Fund”

Mike moved a motion to present a warrant article for Town meeting and with a second from Sean the motion was approved 5-0. Cathy said that 12-15 signatures of Albany residents would be needed to present to the BOS before 2/6/24. Kevin and Cathy said that they would assist in this task.

Under other business, Kevin said that he considered the boundary line marking to be sufficient for the planned timber harvest this winter. He said if time allowed he would check on that area. Mike said that he had recently been in the area and that the boundary was clearly marked.

Sean noted that Kathy Carrier had recently resigned from the Saco-Swift River Local Advisory Committee and that they are looking for an Albany resident to replace her.

With no further business and with no other public comment Cathy asked for a motion to adjourn, with a motion from Mike and a second from Sean the motion was approved 5-0 and the meeting adjourned at 7:30pm.

The next meeting date will be 2/6/24.

Cort Hansen, Conservation Commission Secretary.