

Conservation Commission Approved Minutes August 11, 2011

APPROVED MINUTES

Town of Newmarket, New Hampshire
Conservation Commission
August 11, 2011 7:00 PM
Town Council Chambers

Chairman Kiefaber called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

1. Pledge of Allegiance

2. Roll Call:

Present: George Hilton, Val Shelton (Planning Board rep), Vice-Chairman Bruce Fecteau, Chairman Drew Kiefaber, Jeff Goldknopf, Fred Pearson, Jessica Veysey

Absent: Jim Bergeron (Town Council rep), Stephanie Coster [both excused]

3. Public Comment: None

4. Acceptance of the Minutes:

July 14, 2011: Accepted as revised by Val Shelton

5. Treasurer Report – Jeff Goldknopf: Jeff left notes with Don Parnell concerning the Commission's requests for changing the format of the monthly financial report. Don says it may be difficult to change the format. It is audit season, so no changes have been made yet. Jeff confirmed that the report we see lags a few months behind real-time because of when the Town closes its books each month.

Val Shelton asked that Jeff also verify that the Land-Use Change tax is properly accounted for each month.

George Hilton inquired about the balance of the Schanda Fund.

Jeff Goldknopf reminded the Commission that \$250 were previously allotted for plantings in Schanda Park.

Val Shelton suggested that the Commission could transfer the money from the Schanda Fund to the general fund.

Bruce Fecteau remarked that the Commission shouldn't transfer the money because the money for the Schanda Fund came from the national and New Hampshire Masons and (they?) wanted us to keep the fund separate.

Val Shelton asked to what extent the money in the Fund had been spent down, then remarked that recent additions to the Fund by local businesses [and any remaining monies in the Fund] will easily be used up by the repairs that are needed at the Park.

Jeff Goldknopf said that he had asked about the "Conservation Maintenance Fund," but received no answer.

Val Shelton confirmed that the Commission still does want two funds: an endowment fund and a maintenance fund. (Interest from the endowment fund could be used to support the maintenance fund). She said she would pull up her notes on the subject so that the Commission could add this issue to the Action Item List.

6. Committee Reports – Val Shelton (Planning Board): The Planning Board adopted Chapter 6 of the updated Master Plan (the Economic Development chapter). The Board also received the first out-of-committee draft of the revised site plan regulations from the Stormwater Management subcommittee. The Board will review the draft and comment upon it at their September meeting. They hope to have the subcommittee return another revised draft for the Board's October meeting.

8. Chairman's Report – Drew Kiefaber:

a) 14 Bayview Drive: The Commission received a Standard Dredge and Fill Application on August 3rd from Mark West on behalf of the applicant: The Nature Conservancy (TNC). The work is proposed at 14 Bayview Drive off of Bay Road. TNC wants to demolish two camp buildings on the site. The Commission has 60 days to comment on the application. Would anyone volunteer to sit on a Technical Review Committee for the application? The Commission as a whole will discuss the application at its September 2011 meeting.

Fred Pearson, Val Shelton, and Jeff Goldknopf volunteered for the Technical Review Committee.

Val Shelton clarified some information about the application. TNC bought other properties in the same area previously. TNC had removed the buildings from these other properties. The present property is the fill-in piece in between these other properties (in between the Atherton property and the Durham town line (?)). The present property sits on Pittman-Zook cove / the Randall Farm. Demolishing the buildings will require filling in the existing basements, so there is the potential for significant impact.

b) 4 Bay Road: The DES Wetland Bureau sent a letter saying it had received the Commission's letter concerning 4 Bay Rd.

c) NH Local Government: There is an award for municipal volunteers. Contact Drew if you want to nominate someone.

9. New/Old Business:

a) Invasive Species at Wiggin Farm: Drew Kiefaber: The Commission will start pulling invasive plants on Saturday at 9 AM. Drew contacted the Great Bay Resource Center to see if the Commission could borrow the weed wrenches. He assumes he will be able to pick them up on Friday.

Jessica Veysey asked if the Commissioners had tools we could use in case the weed wrenches were not available.

Drew Kiefaber and others said that they had clippers, shovels, and a pry bar they could bring.

George Hilton offered to bring his chain saw. There was discussion about whether a chain saw was needed and also safe. It was decided that George should bring his chain saw if he wanted to.

Drew Kiefaber (?) noted that he had spoken with Rick Malasky about disposal of the plants. Rick suggested that the Commission pile the plants in the field and the DPW would burn the pile during the winter.

Val Shelton said she would bring tarps to help carry the plants overland.

Jeff Goldknopf questioned whether tarps would be necessary. A discussion ensued. It was decided to bring the tarps and assess the situation in-situ.

b) Schanda Park Kiosk: Drew Kiefaber: The sign is in-hand. LRAC will buy the safety glass for the kiosk. The glass can be delivered in 1 day. Drew will cut the wood for mounting the glass and sign.

Bruce Fecteau offered to help Drew.

c) Easement Monitoring: Drew Kiefaber: Last winter after monitoring at Nostrum Farm, the Commission said that it wanted to monitor Nostrum at the end of the growing season in 2011. Drew suggested that it would also be easier to spread the monitoring across all the easements out over a longer time period than happened last year. When should the monitoring be done?

Bruce Fecteau said that some of the monitoring is easier to do in the winter because the wetlands are frozen in winter. He asked whether the boundaries had to be walked at each property.

Val Shelton recommended monitoring Nostrum Farm while farming was actively occurring so that the Commission can key in on the farming activities that might interact with the specific clauses of the Conservation Restriction that were a concern for the Commission. Walking the boundary is not as big a deal on Nostrum Farm. The Commission was mostly concerned with only one issue last year: the wetland buffer and the appropriate location for the buffer with respect to farming activities.

It is unclear whether any part of the wetland buffer is currently marked or not. Val Shelton will look to see if there is an existing survey. If a survey is available, Jeff Goldknopf will look for the bounds in the field if possible.

Drew Kiefaber said that he thought the Commission should monitor Wiggin Farm in the winter, Piscassic-Loiselle in September/October perhaps, and – for the Smith Sisters property, perhaps the fall. For Smith Sisters, we should make sure to let the Audubon Society know when we are monitoring this property.

There was a question about whether the Commission had to monitor the Silverman-Schneer easement. Drew Kiefaber said he thought someone else monitored this property, but he will check to make sure.

George Hilton said he thought we should ask the farmers when it would be convenient for the Commission to monitor Nostrum Farm. He thought we should monitor Wiggin Farm in the winter. He thought it didn't really matter when we monitored Piscassic-Loiselle.

Drew Kiefaber mentioned that hunting was a seasonal issue to be concerned with at Nostrum Farm. Should we target some time in the first two weeks of September for Nostrum?

Val Shelton said she would pull the monitoring report for Nostrum for 2010 and see what the recommendation was. She will email the Commission to let it know what she finds. She recommended flagging the easement before monitoring so that the Commission knows where the wetland buffer is supposed to be.

If the Commission wanted to have the wetland buffer surveyed, how would it go about seeking bids? Would it put out an RFP or is there a set contract for the town for such jobs? Val Shelton will call (the town?) to find out.

d) New Alternate: Drew Kiefaber: Donald Tucker was approved as the new alternate to the Conservation Commission at the 8/3/11 Town Council meeting. Thinks the Commission is now maxed out for members and alternates.

e) Old Home Weekend: Drew Kiefaber: Ed Wjonowski requested use of Schanda Park for Old Home Weekend. The use

would be consistent with past use of the park for this purpose.

Val Shelton made a motion to grant permission to Old Home Day to use Schanda Park on 8/13 and 8/14/2011.

Fred Pearson seconded. All in favor.

f) Boyscout Bat Houses: Drew Kiefaber: There is a boyscout who would like to donate about 5 bat boxes to the Town. Drew will send out info about the boxes.

Bruce Fecteau asked whether the boxes should be put in specific areas.

Drew Kiefaber said yes. They should be close to water (up to ½ mile from a water source potentially) and south-facing. He didn't know about an appropriate height for the boxes.

Bruce Fecteau talked about the bird houses that were put up at Piscassic-Loiselle. A neighbor of that property had also asked if the Commission wanted bat houses for the property.

Val Shelton said that the Commission must consider whether the placement of the boxes makes sense with respect to whether predators can access the boxes. Mounting the boxes on barns may be a good idea.

Fred Pearson said that he knows that bats thrive in barns.

Val Shelton asked whether we should put the boxes where we know there are already bats.

Fred Pearson said that we should probably leave existing, established populations alone.

Drew Kiefaber agreed that this was probably a good thing to do.

A question was raised about whether it was too late to mount the boxes this year. Suggested locations were Piscassic-Loiselle and Wiggin Farm or at the boat launches. The Commission will discuss further in September.

g) TNC Properties: Drew Kiefaber: Duane High (?) has been in contact to remind the Commission that it had previously allocated \$5000 in matching funds for conservation lands that the TNC was working to purchase. TNC will be sending the Commission an invoice for \$5000 to this effect. That money will help with conservation of the following Newmarket properties: 1) Hayden Farm on Bald Hill Road, 2) the MacIntosh well easement property, 3) the Smith Sisters property.

Jeff Goldknopf asked whether Newmarket could contribute funding towards properties that were located beyond the town's boundaries.

Val Shelton said that this money was allotted as a match so that TNC could get grant money from another source, but that is it true that the Town had voted a few years ago not to allow for Town monies to be spent to fund any project that was entirely outside of the town boundaries. She suggested that the Town work to bring this question back to the town ballot in the near future. Were the question to be brought back, however, it would need to be accompanied by a big public education campaign. She felt that one of the big reasons the Town voted against this question previously was because the question had been put on the ballot in a bit of a rush, and the public didn't really get a chance to understand what it was all about.

h) Action Item List: The Commission discussed how to tackle the Action Item List, a list of tasks that were raised at

previous meetings, but had not yet been addressed. The list was compiled by Stephanie Coster.

Val Shelton and the Commission at-large explicitly recognized Stephanie's effort and wonderful work in putting the list together. Val Shelton said that she could put the list in a spreadsheet and email it out to the Commission. Then Commissioners could volunteer/sign up for those tasks that each person felt most suited to tackle. We could then track progress by periodically revisiting the Action Item List at future meetings and/or via email communication. The Commissioners agreed that this was a good idea.

New Business:

i) Compost Barrel: Bruce Fecteau mentioned that someone had called him about purchasing a compost barrel. He had given her Fred Pearson's number.

Fred Pearson mentioned that there would be only one composter and three rain barrels still available after this current sale.

j) Heritage Festival: Bruce Fecteau reminded the Commission that the Festival would be on September 24th and 25th. He has reserved the boat for the river tours and hopes to get the same price for the rental. He hopes that George Hilton will help again with the piloting of the boat and he reminded the Commission that help will be needed for the Commission's kiosk at the Festival. He looked at the tide charts and thought that the Commission could probably give boat tours from about 9 AM to about 5 AM +/- each day.

George Hilton said that he could help pilot the boat and that he could also pick the boat up if needed.

Fred Pearson has the tents for the kiosk.

Val Shelton, Bruce Fecteau, and the Commission at-large would like to give a giant thank you to Fay's Boat Yard in Guilford, NH for the generous rental price that they have historically provide for the boat rental. Perhaps a sign with their name could be placed on the boat? Bruce Fecteau will inquire.

k) Conservation Scholarship Money: Val Shelton reminded the Commission that it wanted to discuss how it would like to award this money in the future. In the past, the money had been used to fund students' trips to environmental camp. Interest in both the high school scholarship and the environmental camp waned over time. Meanwhile, there is the Discovery Science Center on Great Bay that had to cancel programs this summer because kids couldn't make it there (for monetary and other reasons). There is also the Gundalow at the Center in the fall. The Commission could support local kids going to local environmental camps. The Commission should discuss this further at their next meeting.

Drew Kiefaber questioned how the Commission wanted to proceed. The Commission decided to send a note to the elementary school principle informing the school that the Commission is willing to funding field trips, etc for environmental/science programming. Interested teachers could then send proposals/specific requests (including estimated costs) to the Commission. Drew Kiefaber will draft the letter to the school and pass the letter to the Commission via email for approval.

l) New Action Items: Following are new action items that arose at this meeting:

1) Winter 2011-2012: Burn the pile of pulled invasive species at Wiggin Farm.

2) Separate Conservation accounts into the Maintenance and the Endowment accounts.

3) Schedule easements monitoring dates for conservation easements.

4) Find out about whether the wetland buffer is already surveyed at Nostrum Farm, and if not, find out how to go about initiating a survey.

5) Develop strategy for Town Meeting such that the question of whether the Town can fund conservation projects outside of town boundaries is included on the ballot and the public understands the benefits of such a policy.

6) Make decisions about how to allot conservation scholarship money.

Motion to adjourn at 8:15 pm, by Bruce Fecteau. Drew Kiefaber seconded. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Jessica Veysey

Conservation Commission Alternate