

CONCORD CONSERVATION COMMISSION

REGULAR MEETING

MINUTES

January 12, 2022, 7:00 PM

Council Chambers, 37 Green Street

Attendees: Chair Kristine Tardiff, Vice-Chair Jim Owers, Councilor Brent Todd, Members Jeff Lewis, and Kathy Healy

Absent: Rick Chormann, Chris Kane, and Alternate Emily Landry

Staff: Beth Fenstermacher, Assistant City Planner
Lisa Fellows-Weaver, Administrative Specialist

Public: Councilor Stacy Brown, as the potential new Council Representative to the Commission.

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chair Tardiff at 7:00 p.m.

1. Minutes

December 8, 2021

A motion was made by Mr. Lewis, seconded by Ms. Healy, to approve the minutes of December 8, 2021, with minor edits that do not alter the content of the meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

2. NHDES Items

There were no NHDES items.

3. Reports

a. Trails

Mr. Lewis attended the Trails subcommittee meeting and provided an overview. He stated that this was the new chairman's, Scott Daniels, first meeting and he did a good job.

The Trails Subcommittee scheduled a Zoom meeting for January 25 to continue to discuss updates to the Trail Guides.

Mr. Lewis stated that the Subcommittee is planning to send thank you letters to all trail stewards for their work over the past year. Ranger Mel is working on this and it should be finalized next week. He added that the Subcommittee is also planning an appreciation winter hike in February with the trail's stewards followed by some refreshments. Ms. Tardiff stated that this is a great idea and will be nice to show appreciation to the trail stewards. Ms. Fenstermacher added that Ms. Caron will be taking over the organization of the trails stewards and these events will hopefully make the members more comfortable and feel more like a community and group. Another event of some sort will be held in the summer.

Mr. Lewis stated that the February trails committee meeting has been canceled. The next meeting is scheduled for March 9 at which time the Subcommittee will be establishing the 2022 goals. He added that there will also be a discussion held regarding utilizing the Trail Ranger.

Mr. Lewis stated that there was no other trail maintenance other than what was noted in the Forestry Report.

Ms. Tardiff noted that Ranger Mel assisted with the research and report for the 50th anniversary presentation.

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i. Re-appointments: Rob Knight, Fran Philippe, David Ross (alt.)

Mr. Owers made a motion, second by Mr. Lewis, to re-appoint Mr. Knight, and Ms. Philippe, as regular members, and to re-appoint Mr. Ross as an alternate member; all for three terms to expire December 31, 2024.

The motion passed unanimously.

b. Forestry Report

The forestry report was linked.

c. Tree Committee

Ms. Fenstermacher stated that the Tree Committee minutes were attached for review. The next meeting is scheduled for January 20, at 8 a.m.

Ms. Fenstermacher stated that Donna Reardon, a teacher involved with the environmental clubs at the high school will be coming to the next meeting. The goal is to get the school board and students more involved with tree planting efforts. Ms. Tardiff stated that there have been volunteer events on the trails with students in the past from St. Paul's and the Scouts. She stated that this is a great opportunity for the students and schools to get more involved with the City.

Ms. Fenstermacher stated that the request for additional funding for the State Street and South Street reconstruction project with bump-outs will be before Council in February for a March public hearing. She noted that it seems likely to pass; however, if it is not successful through Council, there will still be an attempt to do the plantings; there are funds available to fund the plantings. She added that she met with General Services and the City Arborist to draft a budget change request for a tree planting budget line with funding taken from the Tree Trust Fund. She is hopeful that she will be able to get additional tree funding given that there is a new ordinance for payment in lieu of plantings for new development, and money has already come in and needs to be spent.

Councilor Todd stated that the bump-out project will be a trail blazer for future projects. He commented that it is good to have a back-up plan but the focus should be on selling the bump-out project and to continue to try to get additional benefits. He stated that there is also a safety issue. Ms. Fenstermacher noted that the importance of bump-outs as traffic calming tools are part of the memo to City Council from the Tree subcommittee.

Councilor Todd asked if there is a list available noting the City's historic trees and award winning trees. Ms. Fenstermacher stated that there is a list and Bob Pollock is working on a book about the trees. She added that there will be a few walking tours forthcoming.

Councilor Brown asked about Treeplish mentioned in the tree committee minutes. Ms. Fenstermacher responded that it is a Tree Planting grant program that was recently done with the students at the Nashua High School. More research is required and this was continued to next month Tree committee meeting.

Ms. Fenstermacher provided some insight on some tree items that will be coming up for Tree Month – April, which will include walking tours, awards, and the Concord tree champion nominations for City businesses that are doing better with their trees.

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d. Local River Advisory Committees

Ms. Tardiff stated that the Turkey River Watershed plan was finalized. Ms. Fenstermacher stated that she will email it out to members when it is available.

4. City Open Space and Easements

Sanborn Road Mowing Agreement

Ms. Fenstermacher stated that she will be reaching out to Jason Cross to remind him of the mowing agreement for Sanborn Road. She explained that the City owns the property and the Forest Society holds the easement. She added that the process began back in February of 2020. The property was monitored this past summer and it is being mowed. She would like to move this item forward to City Council for February.

Easement Letters

Ms. Fenstermacher stated that she would like to have Ms. Caron begin sending out the easement letters in March and do the easement walks earlier to allow more time to address any outstanding issues. Ms. Tardiff offered to assist Ms. Caron with the easement walks.

Merrimack River Watershed Council

Ms. Fenstermacher stated that she met with the Merrimack River Watershed Council (MRWC) last week regarding the proposal for plantings on West Portsmouth Street and Shaker Road. This is a good volunteer project that will connect the river and provide restoration. She added that there are plans for Merrill, Terrill, and Healy parks. She noted that the MRWC will have grants available for assistance on the river in the future. Ms. Fenstermacher stated that she invited representatives from MRWC to present to the Commission at the February meeting.

Healy Park

Ms. Fenstermacher stated that she has spoken to David Gill regarding Healy Park and there are still active homeless camps on site and nothing has changed. Ms. Tardiff stated that the Commission needs to decide to remove the map from the trails guide.

7. City Council/Planning Board

Councilor Todd stated that no new members were appointed at the recent Council meeting. He did report that the Commission 50th anniversary report was on the agenda, he announced it and the report was accepted. He commented that the City is very fortunate to have this group and the work that has been accomplished throughout the decades has made the City more desirable. He thanked the Commission and the many volunteers for their hard work and efforts and hopes that people will look at the 50th report. Ms. Tardiff stated that she is planning to attend the February Council meeting and will be doing a 50th anniversary presentation.

In addition, Councilor Todd stated that this could be his last meeting with the Commission. He stated that he has had a wonderful time as the Council Representative to the Commission. The members are very skilled and the Commission provides a great service to the City. He hopes that the citizens pick up on this when they use the trails and so forth.

Ms. Tardiff stated that the Commission has been very lucky to have had some great Councilor representatives over the past few years and to have the rotation is a benefit to the Commission.

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Ms. Fenstermacher stated that the Trails Master Plan was accepted. Bound copies will be ordered for Trails and Commission members.

Ms. Fenstermacher stated that she will link the 50th anniversary report to the Commission website page.

8. Follow-up/On-going Items:

a. Conservation Preserves

An overview of the Conservation Preserves group was given for Councilor Brown.

Councilor Brown mentioned her desire to see the Gully Hill farm fields converted to community gardens, and she has several contacts that she will be reaching out to. Discussion ensued about the many discussions that have occurred in the past relative to the Gully Hill property that include City soccer fields, other recreation, community gardens, music venues, continued leasing for farm lands, etc. Ms. Fenstermacher noted that the lease for Gully Hill expires December 2022. Mr. Owers commented that City Council sees the parcel as a valuable property and have been concerned that any long term lease could tie it up should an opportunity come along. He added that the City did not want the Forest Society to hold an easement. Discussion continued regarding the condition of the soil and the need for a long enough commitment to get the soil values back. Councilor. Brown provided her ideas of what she would like to see developed for Gully Hill.

Ms. Fenstermacher stated that the Preserves group could discuss future goals of Gully Hill at their next meeting. Mr. Owers stated that the City needs to decide what it wants to do for this property.

Ms. Fenstermacher stated that she spoke to the City Manager about potentially reconvening the Gully Hill Ad hoc committee and he would be following up with the Mayor. If the committee is not going to be re-convened then the Preserves committee could begin to address Gully Hill. She suggested talking to the current farmer that utilizes and leases the property.

Councilor Todd stated that with the recent loss of Stickney Ave. for development, Councilors may be looking to this parcel for future development on the river. He agreed with the need for comments/concerns from the current farmer as well as the Conservation Commission and commented that there needs to be a vision of the scope and it will take resources. He added that with any committee there will be staffing needs.

b. MRGT

Councilor Todd stated that Council still supports the project and want to see it happen; nothing has changed. Negotiations continue with the State. Ms. Fenstermacher stated that the City has decided not to purchase the section of the Concord – Claremont rail line between Pierce Manse and N. State Street due to several title issues with properties along that portion of the line.. Therefore, funding will not be coming from the Conservation Commission Trust Funds, only funds potentially from the bond for the northern rail line.

c. Education/Outreach: ConcordTV videos, 50th anniversary ideas

Ms. Fenstermacher stated that Ms. Caron has been working on Instagram posts and the proper use of trails. She has also worked on a pamphlet and poster for wetlands buffers. Members will provide additional ideas for other things for Ms. Caron. Councilor Todd stated that it is very important to show where the position has been or can add value. He stated that the Commission

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should be working on ways for the position to expand.

d. Conservation Easement Standard Templates

Mr. Lewis commented that the Easement Templates should be a goal of the Committee to accomplish and should be moving to the forefront as other goals have been accomplished.

9. Other Business

a. Election of Officers

Mr. Owers made a motion to retain the current officers with Ms. Tardiff as Chair of the Conservation Commission through December 2022 and Mr. Owers as Vice-Chair of the Conservation Commission through December 2022. Seconded by Ms. Healy.

The motion passed unanimously.

b. Goals

Ms. Tardiff stated that she would like to begin working to change the Land Use Change Tax from 50% back to 100%. She stated that there is not much funding coming to the Commission any more without the percentage increased. She explained that this is the funding the Commission needs and uses to move forward for land protection. Councilor Todd stated that the point is well taken. This is a very valuable for the City and if the Commission is limited then they are not able to take the opportunities when they arise.

c. Other

- i.** Mr. Lewis thanked Councilor Todd for his time on the Commission; it is appreciated. He added that he has done a great job over the past few years. He welcomed Councilor Brown and added that it is great to have City Councilors assistance.
- ii.** Councilor Todd stated that there is a resident in Penacook with property abutting the park who is trying to promote a concept of nature butterfly garden, and unmanicured lawns. He stated that there may be other residents that are interested in doing the same. Ms. Fenstermacher replied that there is information on pollinator gardens on the Recreation Department's website for homeowners. She stated that she will make sure to cross promote this onto the Conservation Commission's page.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Mr. Owers made a motion, second by Mr. Lewis, to adjourn the meeting at 8:39 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Lisa Fellows-Weaver
Administrative Specialist