

CONCORD CONSERVATION COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING  
MINUTES  
February 8, 2017, 7:00 p.m.  
Second Floor Conference Room, City Hall, 41 Green Street

Members present at the meeting included: Jim Owers (Vice Chair), Rick Chormann, Jr., Chris Kane, Tracey Boisvert, and Kathy Healy. Assistant City Planner Beth Fenstermacher and Administrative Specialist Lisa Fellows-Weaver were also present. Jeff Lewis (alternate) arrived later in the meeting.

**1. Minutes**

*January 11, 2017*

A motion was made by Mr. Chorman, and seconded by Ms. Boisvert to approve the January 11, 2017, minutes, with edits that do not affect the context or outcome of the meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

**2. Rob Knight, Trails Subcommittee chairman, to report on goals and accomplishments of the subcommittee**

Rob Knight, chairman of the Trails Subcommittee met with commission and provided an update of the subcommittee's accomplishments throughout 2016. He also presented a list of proposed goals from the subcommittee for 2017 and requested approval from the Conservation Commission.

A discussion was held regarding signage for the trailheads. Ms. Fenstermacher stated that signs will be produced by the prison and will be consistent with text colors and fonts. Additionally, the committee will work to provide consistent information in all of the kiosks. It was also mentioned that there should be signs noting wildlife sensitive areas within the trails.

Ms. Healy suggested that the maintenance of handicap accessible trails be added to the goals list, specifically removal of the overgrowth on the Batchelder Mill Road and Riley trails. Regarding future trail planning, Ms. Boisvert suggested that the goal should be amended to include identifying obstacles for the proposed trails, for example parking, and include discussions to determine support and potential concerns from neighborhoods surrounding the proposed trails.

Mr. Knight suggested a joint meeting with the Trails Subcommittee and the Conservation Commission to discuss concerns regarding the approach to make the Rum Hill to Winant Park trail an official City trail. Ms. Fenstermacher suggested that this meeting occur after the Open Space Plan is completed.

Mr. Knight ended the presentation by thanking the volunteers for their 800+ hours of service working on the trails. He also commended Ron Klemarczyk and the staff for their professional skills as it is important to have the interface with the City and committees as well as to have the ability to make maps, address trail issues, and avoid maintenance issues. He stated that the team work has been what makes these projects successful.

**3. Alex Krofta, Merrimack River Watershed Council, and Tim Fleury, UNH Extension, to present proposed riparian buffer restoration for the W. Portsmouth Street property.**

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Mr. Krofta and Mr. Fleury met with the Commission to discuss the restoration of the buffer at the West Portsmouth Street agricultural property. Mr. Krofta stated that they have done these types of riparian restoration in NH and MA and have been looking for another site in NH. The plants will be paid for by a grant and volunteer labor will be used to do the plantings.

Mr. Krofta stated that this is a good time to be doing this project due to the lease transfer as well as the City's plan to add the 100 foot buffer along the river. He explained the planting process using volunteers, and stated that he proposes to plant 300 small seedlings of native trees and shrubs within the 100 foot buffer. They will get the plants from the NH state forest nursery. He explained that these bare root seedlings will densely re-vegetate the buffer and the plantings will establish ahead of the invasive species that will also grow in that area. He added that they are proposing to use a denser planting in the wetter area with 10-foot spacing and the spacing outside of wet areas will be widened up to 15 feet.

Mr. Krofta stated that the erosion was occurring due to surface water flow off of the field and cutting the bank, and the beavers climbing the bank. The vegetation will assist with erosion control by slowing the sheet flow. Mr. Chorman expressed concern with the beavers eating or impacting the seedlings. Mr. Fleury replied that the beavers are more interested in the corn. There was also discussion about adding species for pollinators, he noted that they will consider something to use for the pollinators.

Ms. Boisvert asked about monitoring. Mr. Krofta stated that monitoring is not within the grant. Mr. Fleury stated that he will monitor.

It was suggested that educational signage be added, Mr. Krofta indicated that they will add signage as part of the project.

Ms. Fenstermacher asked if the Heritage trail should be seeded. Mr. Krofta stated that he only suggested that the trail be pulled away from the bank more and that he did not have any recommendation for seeding the trail, it would just wear down with use. A discussion was held regarding the effectiveness of the 100 foot buffer and if a larger buffer should be proposed. Mr. Krofta stated that the 100 foot buffer is a great start. He suggested adding verbiage to the leases requiring the buffer. He added that he will look into leases and buffers more for the Commission.

**4. Sam Durfee to report on the 2016 Conservation easement monitoring**

Mr. Durfee provided a report noting the easement monitoring and trail monitoring that he did over the summer and fall months. He stated that this project was easier than last year and was completed in less time; therefore, using only 60% of the budget, which will allow some funding to be available for work to begin in the spring if so desired by the Commission.

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Mr. Durfee stated that there are some easement violation items that should be followed up. Additional discussion ensued as to the proper process of addressing these issues and possible violations. He also commented on the status of the handicap accessible parking area at the Riley Trail needing to be addressed and the fact that there are some trails that are overgrown with vegetation that should also be addressed.

Mr. Durfee explained that there are some concerns with boundaries and a discussion was held regarding hiring Bartlett and Associates to complete surveys.

The Commission requested that Mr. Durfee provide a list prioritizing the violations as well as a list of boundaries for the area and determine if he feels that a survey is necessary.

**5. Follow up discussion on potential Conservation Easement on the property at 297 Pleasant St.**

Mr. Owers provided an overview of the site walk held at 297 Pleasant St., located adjacent to St. Paul's School land and State property. He stated the purpose of the walk was to view the area and see if the Commission is interested in supporting an easement and if this area is a good use for mitigation for wetland impacts. He explained that the lot is 30 acres; 2 acres are developed in the front of the property and this is the area that would be used for the proposed surgical unit; the rest of the property is being proposed as a conservation easement to meet NHDES requirements for wetland impact mitigation. Ms. Fenstermacher stated that the property owner has met with DES and it was determined that they would also need to pay into the ARM fund. Pictures of the area were viewed.

Neighbors and abutters of property were present. Abutter, Mr. Ryder commented that this area is a residential area with the oldest house on Pleasant Street being on this property. He expressed concern with the proposed project; however, understands how important it is to protect and secure the land. He added that there is an active wildlife population in the area. The abutters are not opposed to securing the land with a conservation easement.

Discussions ensued as to the mitigation process and how NHDES decides as to what the easement would be to satisfy the mitigation requirements. Ms. Fenstermacher explained that the applicant has requested re-zoning and the project will not come before them or the planning board until it is determined whether it goes through with the zoning. The Commission will wait until the next steps before making a recommendation.

**6. Review and approve FY2018 budget**

Ms. Fenstermacher provided an overview of the proposed FY2018 budget. She noted line items with potential changes and increases.

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General discussion ensued as to street trees. Ms. Fenstermacher explained that this item was previously specific to the downtown area; however, now that Main Street is redeveloped, these funds will now stay in the Commission's budget as an opportunity to continue to plant street trees throughout the City.

Ms. Fenstermacher reported that based on her time allocated specifically for Trails/Conservation Commission items; the planning department was recommending increasing the portion of her salary that is paid through the conservation fund.

Under Trail Development, Ms. Fenstermacher explained that funds have been added for an intern to monitor trails, do trail maintenance work, and assist with timber sales. This will aid the forester and relieve him with some of these duties. She noted that the forester supported this suggestion, and recommended a forestry student from UNH. She stated that he explained that it is not cost effective for him to continue to do these items.

Mr. Owers made a motion, second by Ms. Healy, to approve the budget as presented.

**7. NHDES items**

**a. Response letter from Normandeau Associates for the Northern Pass NHDES Wetlands Permit and Shoreland Permit**

This item was reviewed. No action was required.

**8. Reports**

***a. Trails Committee***

This item was covered under Item 2. Ms. Fenstermacher stated that the Trails Committee has been considering developing criteria for recommendations for new trails or for closing trails due to habitat issues or detrimental to wildlife.

***b. Upper Merrimack River Local Advisory Committee***

The annual report was provided for review. Mr. Chorman updated the Commission on "Bug Nights" an evening activity organized by UMRLAC.

***c. Contoocook and North Branch Rivers Local Advisory Committee***

Ms. Fenstermacher stated that Marco Philippon from the Water Department is joining the CNBRLAC and he will be the new representative for Concord.

***d. Forestry*** – a copy of the monthly forestry report was distributed for review.

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*e. Street Trees*

*i. Tree City USA Application submitted*

Ms. Fenstermacher reported that she has submitted the Tree City USA Application. She explained that Concord has not been a tree city for a few years. She said it was worth noting that based on calculations done for the application, it was determined that the City currently spends \$6 per capita for tree planting, care and maintenance.

**9. City Council/Planning Board**

*a. City Council*

Mr. Owers updated the Commission on the recent Council meetings regarding Gully Hill. He explained that Council has opened up this topic from 2013. He stated that the meetings were well attended and much commentary was given providing support to keep the area as an agriculture area with an easement and not have it developed. It was made clear that Conservation funds do provide protection to keep the land as open space. He stated that a variety of discussions were held as to options for the property from plans for recreation areas and uses other than agricultural uses. Mr. Kane mentioned that there are grant opportunities to purchase plants for planting in the buffer.

Ms. Fenstermacher stated that ad-hoc Council committee is not interested in an easement from the Forest Society. Mr. Owers stated that it was recommended to council that the leases be for three years with a one year renewal option and done on a yearly basis. Discussion ensued regarding optional uses for the property within the next three years. Ms. Fenstermacher stated that if Council accepts the recommendation from the Ad hoc committee a RFP will need to be completed and mailed out expeditiously. Ms. Fenstermacher will email the RFP to members for review, if applicable.

Mr. Lewis arrived at 9:08 p.m.

*b. PB update*

Ms. Fenstermacher reported that City administration has recently discussed discontinuing the use of Army Corps of Engineers floodway maps and change to using the FEMA Flood Maps. Members expressed concern with the change due to the fact that the Army Corps delineations are more stringent and more reliable than the FEMA maps, and the Commission does not want to make any changes. Members were in agreement that the City should use the best available data, and changing the floodway mapping is not in the City's best interest.

Mr. Chormann said he would be happy to speak with the City Planner further. Mr. Lewis and Mr. Chormann requested copies of documents specific to the studies used to delineate the Army Corps floodways. Ms. Fenstermacher will ask the City Planner to follow up.

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**10. City Open Space**

*a. Open Space Plan*

Mr. Kane presented an updated map for review showing the difference in types of conservation land and asked for comments or revisions. He will continue to work on the project and update the Commission accordingly.

**11. Follow-up Items:**

*a. Northern Pass*

Ms. Fenstermacher provided a brief update relative to Northern Pass and her recent experience with pre-filed testimony and data requests.

*b. Haller Properties*

*c. Rattee Property/Other*

Ms. Fenstermacher stated that the appraisal has not been started to date and she has been made aware of the fact that the property is now under agreement. She asked how the Commission would like to proceed. Members agreed to proceed with the appraisal and reach out to the new owner.

*d. Other Business*

Ms. Boisvert asked for an update on the interest in the Country Hill Estates property on District 5 Road. She stated that NH F&G was originally approached by the owners to determine their interest in the property. At a previous meeting, Jan McClure stated that she would follow up with the owner. Ms. McClure was not at the meeting to provide an update.

Mr. Owers asked about the status of the Hoag property near Broken Ground and whether it is available for sale. No commission members were aware of any updates on that property.

**There being no further business, Mr. Kane made a motion, second by Ms. Boisvert to adjourn. The motion passed unanimously at 9:43 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Lisa Fellows-Weaver,  
Administrative Specialist