

**Conservation Commission Meeting  
Public Minutes  
October 11, 2023**

**Members Present:** Bob Stephens (Vice Chairman), Andy Laroche, Andy Artimovich, Lise McNaughton, Becky Dunham, Matt Lipinski, Doug Cowie (Alternate).

Vice Chairman Stephens called the meeting to order at 6:31pm.

**Chair Election**

Vice Chairman Stephens opened the floor for nominations to fill the Chairmanship vacancy created by the departure of Mark Young from the Conservation Commission. Lipinski nominated Becky Dunham to be the next Chair, Laroche seconded, and the nomination was unanimously approved with Dunham abstaining. Chairperson Dunham presided over the rest of the meeting.

**Attendance:** Motion by Stephens, second by Dunham, to appoint alternate member Cowie as a voting member in tonight's meeting. Unanimously approved.

**Agenda Items**

1. **Minutes Review:** Review of the draft Minutes from the September 13, 2023 Commission meeting was deferred until next month.
2. **Goals:** McNaughton and Lipinski are to review and recommend updates to Commission handbook from 1995, including long term goals. Chairperson Dunham reported that the Town's conservation files also need review, and should be reconciled with the SELT list of conserved parcels in Brentwood. She additionally reported that the Planning Board allows for a Commission representative as part of that Board and we may wish to appoint one. She then reviewed the process for adding an Alternate member to the Commission in order to fill the vacancy created when Dunham became a full voting member. Finally, the Commission needs to submit its recommended 2024 budget to the Selectboard by October 24, 2023. The current annual budget is \$13,652. An additional \$75,000 is separately allocated, which comprises the annual conservation fund.
3. **Property Development Reviews:** McNaughton reported that she reviewed the presentation made by Gove Environmental Services last month regarding a 13 lot subdivision and its proposal to adjust a small portion of the boundary line on map of one wetland areas to correctly correspond to the actual area and more accurately portray the wetland delineation. NHES appears to know of no precedent for taking this type of action. McNaughton recommended bringing in a neutral third party (suggested Lenny Lord) to review and advise on the proposal and next steps. She will also contact Ebben Lewis of the Wetlands Bureau for any additional guidance.

#### **4. Prospective Conservation status/updates (non-public as needed under the law)**

- a. Fuller Property Discussion: Stephens reported that Jeremy Lougee of SELT presented the revised conservation proposal and accompanying budget package, including a timeline, to the Selectboard yesterday. Following a thorough Q&A by the Selectboard, it voted to approve moving forward with conservation of the tract. Stephens also reported that the Town Administrator had obtained legal opinions stating that: 1) farmland is eligible for conservation, and 2) a town may be the primary easement holder under a conservation easement if it wished to do so, or it may hold an executory interest in an easement owned by another entity.
- b. Webb Property: Dunham will arrange a meeting with Mrs. Webb to discuss potential easement terms, interests, etc. on the property she wishes to have conserved. Other Commission members identified by Chairperson Dunham may be invited.
- c. Tremallo Property: A small, potentially conservable tract has been offered for conservation by its owner. McNaughton will follow up.
- d. Swasey Property: Chairperson Dunham offered to meet with the Swaseys (who were in attendance) to discuss potential easement terms. Dexter Swasey summarized the properties being offered as a 70 acre tract owned jointly with his family, and an adjacent 10 acre tract owned by him. General public access would be allowed but no public hunting, fishing, or trapping would be permitted. SELT is to be the easement holder. Artimovich then moved to engage with SELT to manage the conservation process but following discussion, the motion was withdrawn. Charlton Swasey requested as a first step that the Commission agree by formal motion and vote to proceed with conservation under an easement that would: 1) name SELT as the easement holder; and 2) acknowledge the landowner of record's ability to regulate activities on the property relating to public hunting, fishing and trapping. Remaining easement terms would be negotiated at a later date. Following discussion, Lipinski moved to adopt Mr. Swasey's request and proposed to approve it as stated. Cowie seconded and the motion was unanimously approved with Stephens abstaining.
- e. Spead Property: The owner of a ¼-acre property has offered it for conservation. McNaughton will contact Beth Spead to get further details.

#### **5. Other Business**

Artimovich reported that of the \$13,652 current year budget, 97.66% remains. He also advised that the Town received an inquiry from a realtor about a contact from a Commission member on a piece of property that had been listed for sale. The realtor assumed the purpose of the call was to negotiate, which was inaccurate, as the caller was merely seeking information. Artimovich then suggested that any Commission member talking to a property owner about a potential conservation should have Commission authorization first.

Upon inquiry from Chairperson Dunham of any other matters from residents in attendance, Town resident Bruce Stevens wished to continue a discussion from last month's meeting about the merits and legalities of Town ownership of conserved property. A lengthy interchange ensued. Lipinski ultimately recommended to the Chair that this discussion should be tabled until an actual proposal for Town ownership of a conservable piece of property was being considered. Chairperson Dunham tabled the discussion accordingly.

Vice Chairman Stephens reported that the Commission received an email from an abutter of the Pickpocket dam advising that the Town of Exeter wishes to remove the dam, perhaps as a result of pressure from the federal EPA. The Commission will continue to monitor the situation.

Upon motion by Lipinski, second by Cowie, the meeting was adjourned at 8:00pm.