

**Conservation Commission Meeting
Public Minutes
March 13, 2024**

Members Present: Becky Dunham (Chair), Andy Laroche, Lise McNaughton, Matt Lipinski (Secretary), Andy Artimovich (Selectboard Rep), Doug Cowie (Alternate), Rob Wofchuck (Alternate), Michelle Siudut (Alternate), Patrick Marcoux (Alternate – arrived 6:45pm). Absent: Bob Stephens (Vice Chair), Brian Silva

Chairman Dunham called the meeting to order at 6:31pm. Motion by Lipinski, second by McNaughton, to designate Cowie and Wofchuck voting members for this meeting. Unanimously approved.

Agenda Items

5a. **Guest Speaker Presentation:** Barbara Richter, Executive Director, New Hampshire Association of Conservation Commissions (NHACC).

Ms. Richter gave an informative presentation on the NHACC’s mission, goals, and activities. Among its primary focus areas are providing support, education, assistance, and training to town conservation commissions as well as the public at large; conducting research on natural resource protection; completing wetlands permit reviews; and doing outreach to town commissions. It also provides advocacy at the statehouse on bills impacting conservation, and it provides regular legislative updates regarding such bills. Ms. Richter advised that there are currently two relevant bills pending: HB1302, which would allow towns the option to elect conservation commission members instead of appointing them; and HB1479, which would prohibit the use of municipal funds for lobbying. The NHACC is opposing both of these bills.

Ms. Richter announced that the NHACC will be conducting Wetlands training in June, probably at Tuckaway Tavern, and the next “lunch ‘n learn” event would be on aquatic resource funds, with Emily Nichols presenting.

Ms. Richter encouraged all in attendance to check out the organization’s website at www.nhacc.org, and to contact her as needed at barbara@nhacc.org. She then addressed questions from the Commissioners and the public in attendance.

1. **Minutes Review:** Review of the draft Minutes from the February 7, 2024 Commission meeting. Upon motion by Wofchuck and second by McNaughton, the minutes were unanimously approved.

2. **Bills & Reimbursements:** None.

3. **Correspondence & Notices:** Dunham advised: a) the Planning Board received a legal notice that the presentation on the Lambert property has been postponed after a question was submitted by the town engineer; b) a bond reduction was accepted on Three Ponds; c) a Deer Hill Road property is being divided; and d) a safety audit is being conducted on part of Hwy 125.

4. Old Business

- a. **Pickpocket Dam Removal:** Robert Span provided an update. The Town of Exeter, which owns the dam, is studying options from modification to removal. A feasibility study was completed and at a recent public hearing about the dam, most in attendance opposed dam removal. Mr. Span reported that while dam removal would not impact Exeter at all, the impact to Brentwood would be substantial, with significant environmental consequences to the 3.5 miles of river from the dam to Haigh Road. It is estimated that the river would be lowered by up to 10 feet, with the impounding area reduced by up to 83%, resulting in a 70 acre loss of surface river area. Exeter remains intent on removing the dam. A decision on the grant to subsidize this removal is expected by July of this year.

A group of interested Brentwood citizens continues to work on this issue, and State Representative Eric Turer is part of an advisory committee reviewing the process. He has asked that state Fish & Game officials attend the next Exeter River Advisory Committee meeting in order to explore the fish passage question. Comments to the Town of Exeter are due March 21, 2024.

Following discussion, it was generally agreed that we need to be aggressively vocal about this issue, and it was suggested we ask for NHACC support and assistance. Lipinski then moved that the Commission encourage the Selectboard to send a letter, with full Conservation Commission support, to the Town of Exeter expressing our concerns about dam removal and request that no action be taken without thoroughly addressing Brentwood's concerns. Cowie seconded and the motion was unanimously approved. Dunham and Lipinski will draft a letter for the Selectboard's consideration.

- b. **Consultant:** A draft consulting contract has been received and is being reviewed.
- c. **Conservation Manual Review:** Lipinski reported that he had completed his review and an updated draft manual was distributed to the Commissioners. Lipinski asked that upon review, the Commissioners send him any comments or suggested changes, and that we would further discuss the draft update at next month's meeting.
- d. **Forest Management Capital Reserve Fund:** Fund will be retained for now. The Selectboard will present any further recommended actions to the Trustees of the Trust Fund next year.

- e. **Property Reviews/Update Status** (nonpublic as needed under the law):
 - i. Fuller Property: Conservation efforts are moving forward. Karen Clement and Joyce Gallant are working on the bond funding application.
 - ii. Spead Property: No response has been received to the letter sent to the property owner last month.
 - iii. Swasey Property: The Swaseys continue to consider their various options. Conservation efforts are currently on hold.
 - iv. Tremallo Property: The property owner thanked the Commission for the letter we sent advising that no financial assistance is being recommended by the Commission in order to transition this property into conservation, and that because the parcel is small and potentially unbuildable, funding is not justified.

- f. **Outreach to landowners**: No new actions reported

- g. **Annual Spring Cleanup**: Scheduled for April 20, 2024 from 8-10AM (rain date is April 27). Marcoux will recruit volunteers via the Commission's Facebook page and otherwise.

- h. **Conservation Commission Facebook Page**: Marcoux will serve as lead administrator with Dunham and Lipinski as backup.

- i. **Green Burial Workshop**: Dunham recently attended via Zoom. Presentation was very informative on the process, costs, regulations, etc.

- j. **Town Boundaries Update**: Lipinski reported that he had completed the Brentwood/Kingston perambulation with Phil Coombs, Kingston DPW Director. Accompanying them was an individual from each town's respective highway departments. A June 13, 2005 report which identified 10 boundary markers, 6 of which could not be found at that time, was the starting point for this effort. Similarly, the same 6 markers could not be found in the just completed perambulation. As a result, Lipinski advised that per Mr. Coombs, a new survey may need to be obtained, with Kingston initiating it and the two towns splitting the cost. Mr. Coombs is preparing an updated draft report summarizing the current findings which will be sent to Lipinski and ultimately signed off by both towns when final. Kingston will get back to us on the survey topic at a later date.

5. New Business

- a. **Guest Speaker Presentation**: Moved to top of agenda and addressed above. A list of potential speakers and presentation topics for future meetings was distributed by Wofchuck.

- b. **New Easement Inquiries:** None currently. An Open Space Subcommittee, comprised of Dunham, McNaughton, Wofchuck, and other town residents has been formed for the purpose of more proactively seeking and identifying potential properties for conservation. Their first meeting will take place soon.

- c. **Other:**
 - i. Commissioners are reminded to submit photos of themselves for posting on the new Town website. Send them to Steph Lewendon with a copy to Michelle Siudut.
 - ii. Eric Turer reported he is seeking increased interaction with the ESRLAC representative.
 - iii. Deb Briscoe reported that there is a new volunteer on the Trails Committee and she will forward that person's contact info to Dunham.
 - iv. Dunham is communicating with Brentwood Road Agent, Wayne Robinson, regarding mowing plans for the Stevens property. Bruce Stevens recommended that a letter be sent to the former lessee asking him to remove the fence he placed on the property. Artimovich will revisit that issue with the Selectboard, which previously declined to do so. Deb Briscoe requested she be notified of the mowing plans when finalized.
 - v. The Commission's next regular meeting is April 10, 2024.

Upon motion by Cowie, second by Lipinski, and unanimously approved, the meeting was adjourned at 8:11pm.