

Conservation Commission Meeting
Public Minutes
October 9, 2024

Members Present: Becky Dunham (Chair), Bob Stephens (Vice Chair), Lise McNaughton, Michelle Siudut, Rob Wofchuck, Matt Lipinski (Secretary), Paul Kleinman (Selectboard Rep), Doug Cowie (Alternate), Andy Laroche (Alternate), Patrick Marcoux (Alternate), Heather Dudley-Tatman (Alternate), Emma Laham (Alternate).

Chairman Dunham called the meeting to order at 6:36pm.

Agenda Items (Item numbers correspond to the sequence shown on posted agenda)

1. **Minutes Review:** The minutes of the Commission's September 11, 2024 meeting were reviewed. Motion by Wofchuck to approve the minutes. Siudut seconded and the motion was approved 5-0 with Stephens and Kleinman abstaining.
2. **Bills & Reimbursements:** Three bills were reviewed. The first is a Hobby Lobby invoice for \$14. The second is for NHACC pre-conference registrations in the amount of \$180, and the third is for NHACC annual dues in the amount of \$300. Motion by McNaughton and second by Siudut to pay these three invoices totaling \$494. The motion was unanimously approved.
3. **Presentation by Northam Survey, LLC:** Moved to next month's meeting.
- 5.a. **Cemetery Trustees:** Jim Hajjar gave a presentation on behalf of the Cemetery Trustees regarding the status of plot availability and the need for additional land to be identified for cemetery designation in order to accommodate future demand. He states there are approximately 100 lots remaining available in the Tonry Cemetery; an average of 9 lots per year are sold; and each is currently priced at \$420/lot. At that rate, we will run out of lots in roughly 10 years, so planning for the more distant future in order to remain compliant with state law is appropriate now. Jim identified 3 parcels of Town-owned land which might be considered for cemetery use. Discussion ensued about the 3 parcels, with the third option appearing most viable. Stephens recommended that regardless of the site being considered, consultation with the Town engineer regarding access, site distances, and encumbrances is highly encouraged. Jim requested that the Commission help identify other possible sites for cemetery use purposes. Dunham advised that the Commission will consider the site options outlined in Jim's presentation, as well as other possibilities, and will report back to the Cemetery Trustees.
4. **Old Business**
 - a. **R.E. Prescott Project on Rte. 27:** The Gove Engineering proposal, which was previously endorsed by the Commission, is proceeding within DES.

- b. **MTI; Planning Board Response to TEC Questions:** The Planning Board addressed TEC's various questions and requirements at its September 19, 2024 meeting, and approved a conditional use permit, which is now pending signoff by the Brentwood Fire Department. A public hearing is scheduled for October 17, 2024.
- c. **Open Space Subcommittee:** The public event entitled Conservation Conversations was held on October 3, 2024, and was modestly attended by invited property owners and others. Duane Hyde, Land Conservation Director at SELT, presented a summary of how the conservation process works, and three current property owners with lands in conservation discussed their experiences, all of which were positive.
- d. **Trails Walk:** Five individuals participated in the Brentwood Recreation property trails walk on September 24, 2024, and reported that the trails are in decent shape. One culvert was identified as a possible concern. Deb Briscoe will come back to the Commission with questions and additional details next month.
- e. **Stevens Field Walk:** Five participants walked the Stevens field on September 20, 2024. Concerns were identified about shrubbery and invasives growing around the perimeter and also in parts of the field, as well as considerable dead wood around the edges and fencing which needed cleanout. Dunham reported that Bob Magnuson, who has been mowing the trails, will mow the south field in November. Wofchuck advised he spoke with Kevin Breen, a local contractor, who offered to complete the necessary remediation for approximately \$5,000 or less. Discussion ensued and the Commission agreed to defer consideration of Kevin's proposal to the budget discussion item later on tonight's agenda.
- f. **Fuller Easement Update:** Bond funding for this easement has been approved and the proceeds have been deposited in the Town's account. A phase 1 environmental assessment has also been completed. SELT is meeting with the landowners this week or next in order to review and finalize easement terms. It will report back on progress following that meeting.
- g. **371 South Road:** The complaint which was filed with DES by a neighbor to this 24-acre property about certain work taking place on it has been added to DES' inspection list. DES is moving forward with its investigation of the case.
- h. **NHACC Conference:** Siudut, Marcoux, and Dunham will attend the NHACC's annual meeting and conference on November 2, 2024.

5. New Business

- a. **Cemetery Trustees:** Presentation was made earlier in the agenda. See above entry.

- b. **Annual Monitoring of Easements:** McNaughton advised she is in the process of scheduling the property inspections and thanked the individuals offering to help with this effort.
- c. **HOP Grant:** The Town has applied for a \$64,000 grant with the NH Housing Opportunity Program (HOP) and is awaiting a decision on its application. A copy of the Town's September 30, 2024 application transmittal letter was distributed to the Commissioners.
- d. **2025 Budget:** Dunham initiated a discussion of budget issues and the need to pay an invoice in the amount of \$7,250 to the law firm of Devine & Millinet for legal services related to extracting \$250,000 from the approved open space bond funding warrant article in order to proceed with the Fuller property easement. Options were discussed regarding whether to pay the invoice out of the Commission budget or ask the Selectboard to pay it out of general funds. Following discussion, Wofchuck moved to pay the invoice out of the Conservation Commission's 2024 budget. Stephens seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

Discussion next returned to the proposal made by Kevin Breen to clear the perimeter logs and overgrowth from the north Stevens Field for an amount not to exceed \$5,000 (see item 4.e., above). Town resident Bruce Stevens offered to contribute \$1,000 to this effort if it proceeds quickly and is completed in this calendar year. Noting that a surplus existed in this year's Conservation Fund, Wofchuck moved to withdraw \$3,000 from the Conservation Fund to be used to help fund this remediation effort. Stephens seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Wofchuck then moved to empower the Chair to negotiate with and hire Kevin Green or an alternate contractor to complete the Stevens Field remediation at a price not to exceed \$5,000. Stephens seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Wofchuck then thanked Bruce Stevens for his offer of \$1,000 to help complete this effort and on behalf of the Commission, publicly acknowledged Mr. Stevens for making that contribution.

Dunham next presented a proposed budget for FY2025, which included three new line items for Professional Services, Travel, and Land Maintenance. The proposed total of \$16,103 represented a 26% increase over this year's budget. Following discussion, and noting that only \$20 of a budgeted \$3,500 had been spent on Easement Monitoring this year, the line item proposed for Easement Monitoring in 2025 was reduced from \$3,500 to \$100. This reduced the proposed total budget to \$12,703, which would reflect level funding with this year's budget. Upon motion by Siudut and second by Wofchuck, the adjusted total FY2025 proposed budget of \$12,703, reflecting level funding with the FY2024 budget, was unanimously approved.

- e. **Upcoming Guest Speaker Presentations:** Stephens advised that he has a speaker committed to present at our December meeting.
- f. **New Easement Inquiries:** None.

- g. **Capital Improvement Plan 2025-2030:** Dunham distributed a copy of the Town's draft Capital Improvement Plan which detailed and itemized projected expenses associated with capital improvement projects over the next five years.

6. **Other Business:**

Miscellaneous Announcements:

- i. Dunham advised that an abutter to a Town subdivision registered a complaint about a possible encroachment. The complaint was investigated and no encroachment was found.
 - ii. Dunham advised she received a notice that water will be removed from Pawtuckaway Lake in order to supply the Lamprey River.
 - iii. Dunham advised that a Farm Ponds and Water Resources workshop will be held on October 23, 2024 in Kingston for anyone interested in attending.
 - iv. Siudut advised she is continuing to work on the Conservation Manual exhibit formatting and the Granit View project.
- a. **Next Meeting:** Dunham advised that the next Commission meeting will be on November 13, 2024.

Upon motion by Lipinski, second by Kleinman, and unanimously approved, the meeting was adjourned by Dunham at approximately 8:25pm.