

APPROVED

Town of Grantham Grantham Conservation Commission

MEETING MINUTES JANUARY 26, 2015

Chairman Sheridan Brown called the Grantham Conservation Commission to order on Monday, January 26, 2015 at 7:02 p.m. The meeting was held in the Jerry Whitney Memorial Conference Room at Grantham Town Hall located at 300 Route 10 South in Grantham, NH.

Present: Chairman Sheridan Brown; Susan Buchanan; Dick Hocker; Laura Nagy; David Wood; and Caroline Hoen, Clerk. (Laura Nagy, normally an alternate member of the Commission, served as a voting member for this meeting.)

ADMINISTRATIVE

Approval of Minutes for the 15th December, 2014 Meeting

Chair Brown asked if there were any additions, corrections, or modifications to the draft minutes for the December 15, 2014 meeting. Nagy requested that on Page 1, 4th line from the bottom, the words “create cross-country trails” be replaced by the words “groom cross-country ski trails.” In addition, Brown requested that on Page 2, in the first line of the motion under the title “Commission Reimbursement for Members attending the Annual Meeting of the NHACC,” the words “fees required to attend” be replaced by the words “their \$50.00 attendance fees for.” Brown then asked if there were any further changes to be made.

There being none, a motion was made by Nagy to approve and accept the December 15, 2014 minutes as amended; second by Hocker. There being no further discussion, the motion was put to a vote.

Unanimously Approved & Accepted

Brown noted that, at the suggestion of Town administrative staff, the payment of small, routine Commission expenses, such as the one addressed in the foregoing motion, would henceforward be the purview of the Chair and would not require a Commission vote.

NEW BUSINESS

Brookside Park and Other Trail Improvements

Brown reported having discussed with the Selectmen the Commission’s proposal to build a bridge over Mountain Brook in Brookside Park off Route 10. The Selectmen intend to support the project by including it in the 2015-16 Town budget in the amount of \$2,000 to \$2,500. They stipulated, however, that the Commission raise a matching amount from private funders to address other needed trail improvements. Brown proposed a total Commission fundraising goal

APPROVED

of \$8,000. He noted that the NH Bureau of Trails' Recreational Trails Program could be a promising source of funding and that a Commission application, due in November, would be enhanced by the Town's financial participation in the bridge project. He noted further that universal accessibility and multi-use considerations are also important to the Bureau. Nagy referenced the Jack and Dorothy Byrne Foundation in Hanover as another possible source of revenue.

Wood noted the advantage of scheduling this kind of visible community project in summer 2015 as a way of fostering public good will toward future Commission initiatives. It was agreed that the first priority was to determine exactly what size and type of bridge should be built, and at what cost, before working to secure funding beyond the Town's commitment. Ideas for bridge design were considered and Wood said he would do more research while Hocker offered to get information on a bridge built over Sawyer Brook on Old Dunbar Hill Road, a possible prototype. All agreed that the new structure must be handicap accessible and Nagy suggested that a wheelchair-accessible area on the far side of the bridge also be considered. The Upper Valley Land Trust, the National Parks Service's Rivers and Trails Conservation Association and the Upper Valley Trails Association were all cited as sources for design and universal accessibility standards.

Wood suggested that the Commission begin to develop a list of priority trail improvement projects that could be specified in the Recreational Trails Program application. Hocker noted that most of the Town's trails are located along old road beds and that the most obvious areas for trail development are the Town Forest (the Smith Lot and 438 acres straddling the old Croydon Turnpike), the Flewelling Easement property (Sherwood Forest), and Brookside Park. The following possibilities were discussed:

- Upgrade of two mountain bike trails on the Flewelling Easement property
- Construction of a trail to provide easy public access to the Flewelling easement and Miller Pond (This would involve a recommendation to the Selectmen of steps needed to resolve longstanding issues around public access with the owners.)
- Trail construction previously planned in connection with deferred forest maintenance work in the Smith Lot
- Trail construction along the quarter mile on Old Dunbar Hill road between Sawyer Brook and Walker Road

GCC Winter Outreach/Public Events Planning

Various possibilities for a Commission-sponsored winter outing were discussed. It was agreed that late February would be a good time frame and note taken of the February 14th to 22nd school vacation. Brown stated that he was still working on an indoor presentation on raptors to coincide with vacation and that funding might be available from Audubon and others. Buchanan recommended checking that there were no conflicting Town events.

OTHER BUSINESS

Open Space Committee Update

Buchanan reported that the Committee is currently working on the completion of standardized inventories for each undeveloped property of ten (10) acres or more in Grantham. These are to be completed by the group's next meeting on Thursday, February 5th at 8:30 AM at Town Hall.

APPROVED

The group will then begin work on finalizing the criteria needed to prioritize the properties in terms of suitability for Town purchase as conservation lands. Committee member Craig McArt has prepared a summary of a state report (SB388) on the current status of land conservation in New Hampshire and guidelines for the future. The Committee will be using this summary to develop evaluation criteria and Buchanan agreed to forward it to the Commissioners. Brown noted that some good work is being done in state government to secure and bolster the Land and Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP) that provides matching grants to towns investing in conservation lands.

Grantham Conservation Commission Vacancies

Brown reminded everyone that the Commission has two vacancies to fill and solicited recommendations of possible candidates. Buchanan raised the idea of posting public notices and Brown mentioned that he had included a reference to the vacancies in the Commission's section of the Town Annual Report.

HANDOUTS

None

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Brown asked if there was any further business. There being none, Buchanan moved to adjourn the meeting and Hocker seconded the motion.

The Commission voted unanimously to adjourn at 8:14 p.m.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Grantham Conservation Commission will be held at 7:00 p.m. in the Jerry Whitney Memorial Conference Room on Monday, February 16, 2015.

Respectfully submitted,

Caroline Hoen

Caroline Hoen, Clerk