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Town of Grantham Grantham Conservation Commission

MEETING MINUTES November 19, 2012

Chairman Richard L. Hocker called the Grantham Conservation Commission to order on Monday, November 19, 2012 at 7:01 p.m. The meeting was held in the Jerry Whitney Memorial Room at Grantham Town Hall located at 300 Route 10 South in Grantham, NH.

Present: Chairman Richard (Dick) Hocker; Merle Schotanus; Kristina Burgard; Lindsey Lefebvre; and Caroline Hoen (clerk).

Absent: Joseph Watts (Alternate); David Wood (Alternate); and Jeremy Turner

Members of the Public: Sheridan Brown

ADMINISTRATIVE

Approval of Minutes for 15 October, 2012 Meeting

Chair Hocker asked the Commission members if there were any additions, corrections, or modifications to the draft minutes for the October 15, 2012 meeting.

There being none, Schotanus moved to approve and accept the October 15, 2012 minutes as written; second by Lefebvre. There being no further discussion, the motion was put to a vote.

Unanimously Approved & Accepted

Hocker announced that two items had been added to this meeting's agenda since its first publication. Under "Other Business," non-public sessions for Contract and Personnel Reviews; and under "Handouts," the New Hampshire Guide to Upland Invasive Species.

NEW BUSINESS

New Initiatives

Invasive Species: Schotanus observed that, with much of the work on the Wetlands Protection Program completed, the Commission now has the time to begin a study of invasive species in Grantham. He recommended that a program to deal with this important problem should include: 1) an inventory of invasive species currently extant in Grantham plus the generation of a map showing where they occur; 2) an education program to enlist the public's involvement; 3) a surveillance program to periodically measure the extent of invasive species; and 4) an eradication/management plan. He

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stated that, with a January 2013 start, a preliminary study for such a program could be completed in about six (6) months, so that by summer 2013, the Commission could present a completed plan to the public. In response to a question from Lefebvre as to how the inventory and mapping could be done, Schotanus said he would check with the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission (UVLSRPC) to see what resources are available for this type of undertaking. He stated, however, that the Commission might be able to manage the mapping independently, with some outside direction. He also mentioned that he has been in communication with Douglas Cygan, the New Hampshire Department of Agriculture's expert on invasive species, and that Mr. Cygan would be an enthusiastic and supportive resource for this project.

Open Space Inventory: Schotanus also suggested that the coming year would be a good time to prioritize the development of an open space inventory to be included in the Town Master Plan, either by amendment or in the next revision, a goal that has been under consideration for some eighteen months. He cited both the New London, NH and the Swanzey, NH open space protection plans as models that could be used as reference points. He emphasized that such an inventory would provide data needed to strengthen the case for the community's funding of the Grantham Land Preservation Capital Reserve Fund. He recommended, however, that the process for the inventory not be structured by the Commission, but rather by an advisory committee appointed by the Board of Selectmen. Such a committee might include one Selectman, one member of the Planning Board, one or two members of the Conservation Commission, and two members of the public. He stated that if this committee were to begin work in January 2013, it should be possible for a final plan to be put before the voters at the 2014 Town Meeting. Schotanus thought that the proposed inventory could be presented as an amendment to the current Master Plan, now overdue for its 5-year revision. He pointed out that the inventory would include a listing of all Town-owned properties, an accurate catalog of which has to date not been drawn up. It would also include the results of a public survey to measure the public's estimation of the "rural character" value, which is elevated as an important characteristic in the Master Plan and which specifies "open space" as an element. Schotanus underscored that, by instituting a formal process to include an open space inventory in the Master Plan, the Selectmen would gain more flexibility in the protection of Grantham's open spaces and new support could be generated for the Land Preservation Capital Reserve Fund.

Burgard, while concurring that the protection of open space is a mandated goal of the Master Plan, questioned the procedural correctness of adding the proposed inventory results through an amendment, given that the current Master Plan is already two years overdue for revision. Schotanus suggested that the inventory could alternatively be added as a contingency but that either way, it has the advantage of being in keeping with the goals of the Master Plan. Burgard offered to research the RSA's to see if an amendment or contingency is possible.

Schotanus recommended that the Commission spend the next six weeks researching these two new initiatives before the start of a formal planning process in January 2013. In terms of organizing this preliminary effort, he recommended that the Chair divide the

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Commission into two working groups. Hocker suggested taking up the specifics of the research methodology at the Commission's next meeting.

Flewelling Easement Property Pedestrian Bridge: Hocker introduced a third new initiative, the possible construction of a pedestrian bridge to facilitate public access from Miller Pond Road to the Flewelling easement property. Current access via a driveway leads directly to a 5.1 acre section of the property that is excluded from the easements. During the annual walk of the property in October 2012, the Selectmen and Town Administrator suggested that a new bridge could run from Miller Pond Road across the old dam site on Skinner Brook to a path on the easement portion of the property that runs along the west side of the excluded acreage and joins with Fay Road, thereby providing access via Miller Pond Road to the rest of the property subject to the easements. This route would also discourage the public from inadvertently crossing onto the excluded portion of the property. Further research would be needed to determine if such a bridge is feasible, and to clearly delineate the boundaries of the 5.1 acre area closed to the public. Hocker reported that Town Engineer Erin Darrow will assess construction options for the proposed bridge. He expressed confidence that the project would be a fairly simple undertaking and that costs could be covered by the Flewelling Easement fund. In response to questions from Schotanus, Hocker indicated that a bridge span of about twenty (20) feet is contemplated, with a possible width of six (6) feet to accommodate snowmobiles. He also reported that the Blue Mountain Snow Dusters ORC has expressed interest in assisting with the project. It was agreed that the Commission would wait for the engineer's feasibility report and cost estimates before contacting the property owners and other interested parties to see if such a bridge is acceptable to them. However, Hocker hoped that a spring 2013 planning phase followed by summer construction would be possible.

OTHER BUSINESS

Planning for Conservation

Grantham Wetlands Inventory and Protection Program – Ongoing Planning

Schotanus noted that the Commission had crossed a major hurdle with its submission, on November 13, 2012, to the Planning Board of the Commission's report and recommendations arising from the Wetland Inventory, including the recommendation of eight (8) wetland evaluation units for designation as prime wetlands. He also noted that the Commission's recommendations included proposing two (2) warrant articles to be presented to the voters on the March 2013 ballot, one regarding the designation of a Town wetland map and index, and the other relating to prime wetland designations. He made special mention of Burgard's outstanding work on the project to date.

General concern was expressed about the timeline for steps that must be taken to ensure inclusion of the warrant articles on the March 2013 ballot. Burgard noted that, assuming the Planning Board accepts the Commission's recommended warrant articles, the next step is a hearing under RSA482-A:15 that requires 30-days prior written notice to all property owners and abutters potentially affected by the proposed prime wetland designations. After this initial hearing, there are "regular" zoning-related hearings on the proposed warrant articles that must be held before an early February deadline. It was

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agreed that, while it is the Planning Board that is charged with scheduling and conducting these hearings, the Commission would lend support by communicating with both the Planning Board and, through the Town Administrator, with the Selectmen, that quick action is needed. Additionally, the Commission is prepared to assist in this effort by providing whatever information and documentation is required.

Hocker asked Schotanus to report on preparations for the Commission's presentation of its recommendations at the regular December 6, 2012 Planning Board meeting. Schotanus stated that the Town Administrator had confirmed that the Commission's November 13th submission had been given to the Planning Board clerk for distribution to the Board's members, who are therefore presumed to be in possession of the background materials. Schotanus was uncertain, however, whether the Planning Board would want a simple discussion of the recommendations or a full presentation with visuals. Hocker agreed to contact Carl Hanson, Chair of the Planning Board, to ascertain what sort of presentation would be needed. It was decided that the services of consultant Dr. Rick Van de Poll would not be required for this presentation. His services would, however, be needed for the public hearing, which the Commission has asked the Planning Board to schedule for late December 2012.

Burgard reported that the following information was posted on the Town's website on November 13th: the report and recommendations submitted by the Commission to both the Planning Board and the Board of Selectmen; the two presentations made at the November 13, 2012 Wetland Inventory Public Forum; and notice of the Commission's upcoming presentation of its recommendations at the December 6, 2012 Planning Board meeting. Burgard also indicated that she would request that the Town place slides on the local government cable access station for all upcoming hearings relating to prime wetland warrant articles. Further, an article she has written on the Wetland Inventory project and the Commission's recommendations will be published in the winter edition of *Eastman Living* magazine.

Schotanus expressed optimism that the two warrant articles would be approved at the March 2013 Town Meeting and noted that, subsequent to that development, the Commission would need to submit packages to the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (DES) for state approval of each of the wetland units designated as prime by virtue of the warrant article. Schotanus reported that Van de Poll is available to complete the DES application, which appears to be quite complex. However, Lefebvre observed that it might be possible for the Commission to manage the process independently in order to avoid the cost of outside assistance. To that end, she offered to review the application requirements and report her findings to Schotanus.

Land Issues

Stocker Pond Access

Schotanus reported that there had been no progress made in finalizing the Cote & Reney Lumber Company's donation of land to the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department. The land in question, 3 ½ acres on the west side of Interstate-89 and 7/10's of an acre on the east side, would provide public access to Stocker Pond. As of this meeting's date,

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there had been no new communication between Todd McIntire of Cote & Reney and Allen Wilson, the independent surveyor who was to draw up a subdivision map. Schotanus is trying to facilitate better communication among McIntire, Wilson and Rich Cook of NH Fish and Game, and hopes this important transaction will be concluded by the March 2013 Town Meeting.

Perambulation Status

Hocker reported that Wood has completed the write-ups for the Croydon and Springfield border perambulations. There is one rather arduous walk still needed to complete the perambulation of the Enfield border, and this walk is tentatively scheduled for November 28, 2012. The completion of the Plainfield perambulation is not required for a few more years, but Hocker stated that Wood would like to initiate this undertaking in 2013 so that all the Grantham border perambulation deadlines are relatively close in time in the future.

NON PUBLIC

Contract Review

In accordance with RSA 91-A:3 II-c, a motion was made by Schotanus and seconded by Burgard to enter into a Non-Public session at 8:16 p.m. to discuss a contract matter. Present were Chairman Richard L. Hocker; Merle Schotanus; Kristina Burgard; Lindsey Lefebvre; and Clerk Caroline Hoen.

Following proper vote, the Commission returned from Non-Public session at 8:16 p.m.

Personnel Review

In accordance with RSA 91-A:3 II-a, a motion was made by Schotanus and seconded by Burgard to enter into a Non-Public session at 8:18 p.m. to discuss a personnel matter. Present were Chairman Richard L. Hocker; Merle Schotanus; Kristina Burgard; Lindsey Lefebvre and Clerk Caroline Hoen.

Following proper vote, the Commission returned from Non-Public session at 8:29 p.m.

HANDOUTS

New Hampshire Guide to Upland Invasive Species

ADJOURNMENT

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

The Commission voted unanimously to adjourn at 8:30 p.m.

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NEXT MEETING

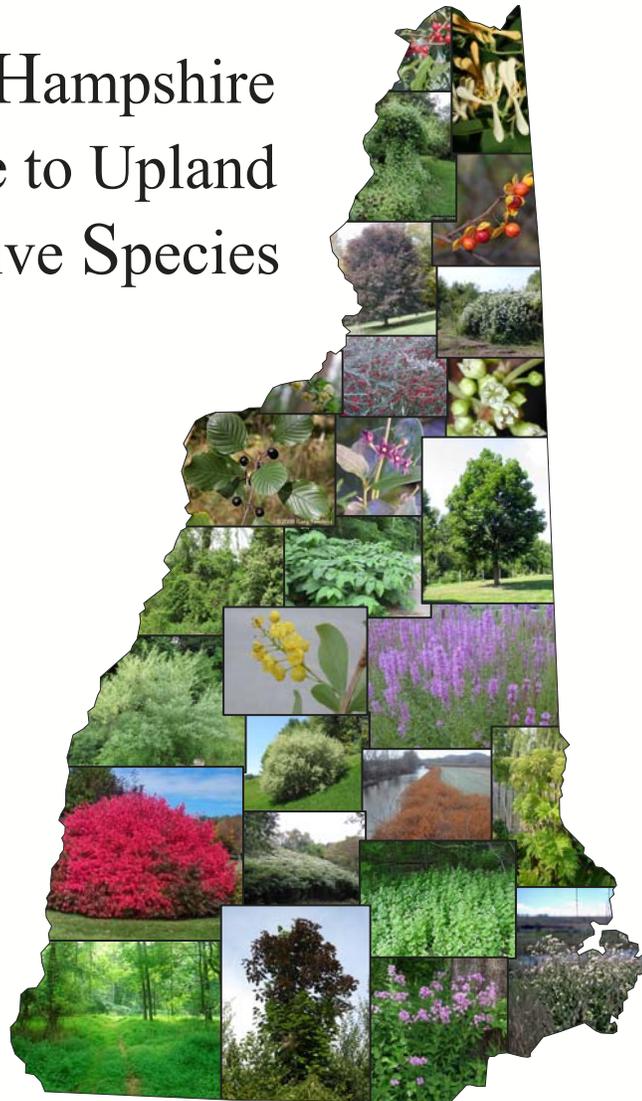
The next meeting of the Grantham Conservation Commission will be held at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, December 17, 2012, in the Jerry Whitney Memorial Conference Room.

Respectfully submitted,

Caroline Hoen

Caroline Hoen, Clerk

New Hampshire Guide to Upland Invasive Species



**New Hampshire
Department of Agriculture
Markets and Food, Plant Industry Division**



**3rd Edition
2011**

Douglas Cygan