

# APPROVED

## Town of Grantham Grantham Conservation Commission

### MEETING MINUTES November 21, 2011

Chairman Richard L. Hocker called the Conservation Commission to order on Monday, November 21, 2011, at 7:02 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; Lindsey Dixon; Dave Wood; Joe Watts (*Alternate*); and Kristina Burgard (*Alternate*).

**Absent:** Jeremy Turner

#### ADMINISTRATIVE

##### *Approval of Minutes for 17 October 2011 Meeting*

Chair Hocker asked the Commission members if there were any additions, corrections, or modifications to be made to the draft minutes for the October 17, 2011 Meeting.

*With no corrections suggested a motion was by Burgard to approve and accept the October 17, 2011 Minutes as submitted; second by Dixon. There being no further discussion, the motion was put to a vote.*

***Unanimously Approved & Accepted***

##### *Approval of Minutes for 31 October 2011 Special Meeting*

Chair Hocker asked the Commission members if there were any additions, corrections, or modifications to be made to the draft minutes for the October 31, 2011 Special Meeting.

Watts asked that the second full paragraph on page 2 be revised to end after “evaluation units.” Burgard requested that on page 1, second to last sentence, “95” be changed to “about 90.”

*With no further corrections suggested a motion was made by Schotanus to approve and accept the October 31, 2011 Minutes as amended; second by Watts. There being no further discussion, the motion was put to a vote.*

***Unanimously Approved & Accepted***

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### OTHER BUSINESS

#### *Town Forest Logging Operation - Status*

Chair Hocker stated that Turner advised him that the approved forestry work in the Town Forest started about the second week in October and the operation was completed as of last Monday, November 14<sup>th</sup>. Turner will provide an update regarding cost/profit and accomplishments at the December meeting. Turner also mentioned that on Wednesday, November 9, 2011, a group from the Grantham Village School came to the site and were able to see the horse-drawn operation in full swing.

#### *Planning for Conservation –*

##### *Continue Planning for Wetlands Inventory project – Next steps*

Schotanus stated with regard to the suspended Wetlands Inventory project, there are a couple of steps that would be useful for the Commission to take tonight, the first being to identify the major tasks that need to be accomplished between now and the restart of the evaluations in May 2012. The second is to decide what questions will be asked of Dr. Rick Van de Poll on December 12<sup>th</sup>. Schotanus noted that while the Wetlands Inventory is technically in a hiatus at this point, there is a lot of work that should be done between now and restarting in May 2012 in order to avoid being in a crisis management mode come the last week in April.

Schotanus reminded the Commissioners that anyone paying out of pocket for materials related to Commission business should be submitting requests for reimbursement to the Conservation Commission, as no person is required to pay for these materials out of their own pocket. Chair Hocker reinforced this reminder, stating that the Commission has a budget of \$1,000.00 for supplies, materials, and meeting/conference attendance.

Schotanus asked Watts what his thoughts were regarding tasks connected to the landowner letter campaign. Watts explained that he believes that there are a couple different categories of landowners at this point: 1) landowners already sent a letter who have responded (currently about 27); 2) landowners already sent a letter who have not responded (currently about 50); and 3) landowners to whom a letter has not yet been sent (likely to be around 100).

The Commission discussed various approaches for contacting these landowners regarding the revised project timeline and evaluation restart in May 2012. Chair Hocker noted for many of the wetland evaluation units within Eastman, there are public access trails/easements across the landowners' properties, and suggested that it may not be necessary to contact those landowners as the evaluations can be performed from the public trails. Burgard stated that it was her understanding that in some instances, there may be parts of a wetland unit on a property away from the public trail that might need assessment, such as a culvert. Schotanus stated that Dr. Van de Poll should be able to identify any such properties, and suggested asking him to do so should be added to the items to be addressed with Dr. Van de Poll on December 12<sup>th</sup>.

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The Commission agreed that with regard to the landowner letter campaign, Watts and Burgard would work on the following tasks: a) for landowners previously sent a letter, prepare two forms of a letter (one including acknowledgement of their previous response) to be sent the week of December 26<sup>th</sup>, which provides an update on the project status and advises that evaluations will restart in May 2012, and a draft should be distributed by December 15<sup>th</sup>; b) for landowners not previously contacted, prepare a revised version of the permission access letter and form and then send these out in early February 2012.

Burgard indicate that once the content of the first set of letters is finalized, she will place a commensurate project status update on the Conservation Commission's webpage, and send a short piece for distribution via the Grantham News list serve.

Schotanus asked Burgard to comment on upcoming tasks in the area of Public Outreach. Burgard stated that in addition to updating the Wetlands Inventory status on the webpage and via the Grantham News list serve, she will try to get a follow-up piece in the Spring 2012 issue of *Eastman Living*. Wood noted that there is also a weekly e-newsletter for Eastman where a notice might be placed, and offered to check into this. Burgard indicated that the hiatus was also a good time to raise public awareness and understanding of not only the Wetlands Inventory project, but also conservation in general, through various forms of outreach.

The Commission discussed various ideas for public outreach, and agreed Burgard would pursue the following: a) by late December, prepare and post project status update on webpage and submit to Grantham News (& Eastman weekly e-News, if possible); b) contact Judy McCarthy regarding possible follow-up piece in *Eastman Living* Spring 2012 issue; c) in late January/early February, contact moderator to inquire about possible information table at 2012 Town Meeting (likely only during ballot voting period); and d) research and schedule a number of "awareness" events/programs in 2012, such as Bird Count, Earth Day activity, trail clean-up day in Town Forest area (perhaps in conjunction with BMSD), quarterly Conservation e-News, and the like. Burgard will prepare a draft 2012 Public Outreach plan for the December meeting. Wood agreed to provide assistance with Public Outreach matters, as the need arises and his schedule permits.

Schotanus asked Dixon to identify tasks that need to be done relating to the Wetland Inventory volunteers. Dixon stated that all the current volunteers need to be brought up-to-date regarding the project hiatus and the May 2012 restart of evaluations. Also, there are a number of things that should be done to improve the wetland evaluation unit packets, such as verifying the units and what is shown on the maps, creating watershed maps for each unit, adding some identifying information, such as road names or GPS points, and adding portions of the 2011 NH Method manual to each packet, including the sample evaluation.

Burgard noted that a final list of improvements to the packets should result from the upcoming meeting with Dr. Van de Poll. After a brief discussion, the Commission agreed that Dixon would coordinate the following volunteer-related tasks: a) by the end of December, send an email to all

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volunteers providing an update on the project and the restart in May 2012; b) after the discussion with Dr. Van de Poll, update all evaluation packets as needed and complete all packet updates by the middle of April; c) in March 2012, send a restart reminder email to all current volunteers and begin recruiting for new volunteers; and d) plan and promote two evaluation training sessions for late April/early May 2012.

Dixon volunteered to start a list of items to address with Dr. Van de Poll on December 12<sup>th</sup>, and will send a draft to the rest of the Commission.

### ***41<sup>st</sup> Annual Meeting, NH Association of Conservation Commissions - Feedback***

Burgard stated that she attended the NHACC annual meeting on November 5, 2011, and it was very informative. At one session, Jay Aube from DES gave a presentation on the changes resulting from the Shoreland Water Quality Protection Act, and his presentation as well as other information on the changes can be found on the DES website under Wetlands Bureau/Shoreland Program – Hot Topics. Burgard offered to send the Commissioners a link if they have trouble finding the information on their own. Burgard noted that it was repeatedly mentioned at the meeting that NH towns can and should adopt their own ordinances relating to shoreland protection, and several towns have examples of ordinances and implementation procedures available for review.

Burgard also noted that at a Public Relations session, it was mentioned that Commissions are entitled to a free webpage on the NHACC website that they can use to publicize their work, and she is thinking about utilizing that as an additional outreach mechanism. Burgard stated there were a number of other good ideas for public outreach presented at the workshop, and that she plans to work some of those into the Commission's 2012 Public Outreach plan.

### **ADDITIONAL BUSINESS**

#### ***Heath Lot Request***

Dixon explained that Craig McArt contacted her and expressed some concerns about the wetlands on Eastman's Heath lot; specifically, that the hydric soils extend further out than shown on some maps. A lot of plans for this lot are under active discussion, including an easement and McArt would like some guidance on delineating the actual hydric soil boundaries through an on-site visit and evaluation before anything further is done. Dixon stated she would organize an evaluation visit in the near future and advise the rest of the Commission when it will take place should they like to participate.

#### ***Proposed Review of Town-Owned Land & Possible Community Garden***

Burgard stated that she attended a Farm-to-School conference at Lebanon High School this past weekend, and it reminded her that farmland and sustainable living are also aspects of maintaining a rural environment and thus should be goals for conservation efforts. She noted the Town has

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lost most of the farming operations that used to provide a source of Grantham-produced food, and if possible, we may want to see if there are any opportunities to bring this back to Town. Burgard indicated that she met a representative of the Grantham Village School at the conference, who advised that the School is very interested sourcing food more locally, and providing food education opportunities to their students via local gardens/farms. In fact, the school received a small grant to start a school garden, and they are looking for ways to implement this, including a viable location for the school garden.

Burgard suggested that the Commission conduct a review of all the parcels currently owned by the Town, and see if there might be any that may support a Community and/or School Garden and if so, pull together a proposal to the Selectmen regarding any such properties. She asked the other Commissioners what their thoughts were on this idea.

Schotanus stated that compiling a list of all the current Town-owned parcels is a planning objective that the Commission talked about earlier this year. Schotanus agreed that such a review would be conducive not only to the current proposal relating to community gardens, but also other conservation goals. Burgard noted that there might not be a parcel appropriate to this particular use but at least the Commission would know what is currently Town-owned so it can research whether any of those parcels have conservation value.

It was agreed that a review and compilation of information on parcels currently owned by the Town would be beneficial in a number of ways, and Burgard was tasked with researching this issue and preparing a list of properties currently owned by the Town.

### **HAND OUTS**

None

### **ADJOURNMENT**

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

*The Commission voted unanimously to adjourn at 8:37p.m.*

### **NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will be at 7:00 p.m. on December 19, 2011, in the Jerry Whitney Memorial Conference Room.

Respectfully Submitted,  
*Jessica Smith*  
*Grantham Conservation Commission, Clerk*