

# **APPROVED**

## **Town of Grantham Grantham Conservation Commission**

### **MEETING MINUTES JULY 16, 2013**

Chairman Richard L. Hocker called the Grantham Conservation Commission to order on Tuesday, July 16, 2013 at 7:03 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; Sheridan Brown; Connie Howard; Lindsey Lefebvre; Joseph Watts (Alternate); David Wood (Alternate); and Caroline Hoen (Clerk)

**Absent:** Susan Buchanan

#### **ADMINISTRATIVE**

##### ***Approval of Minutes for 17 June, 2013 Meeting***

Chair Hocker asked the Commission members if there were any additions, corrections, or modifications to the draft minutes for the June 17, 2013 meeting.

*There being none, a motion was made by Wood to approve and accept the June 17, 2013 minutes as written; second by Watts. There being no further discussion, the motion was put to a vote.*

***Unanimously Approved & Accepted***

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

##### ***Cutting Application***

Hocker reported that the Town had received an application from the owners of the property at 5 Sylvan Walk in Eastman for permission to do selective cutting within the two hundred and fifty (250) foot protected shoreline buffer around Eastman Lake. Wood and Lefebvre have reviewed the application on behalf of the Commission and have forwarded it to the Selectmen for approval as per the normal protocol.

#### **OTHER BUSINESS**

##### **Town Forest Management**

##### ***Smith Lot Plan***

Hocker reported that the Commission had received an invoice from forester Jeremy Turner in the amount of \$120.00 to cover his presentation at the Commission's meeting on May 20, 2013. This presentation was focused on Town Forest maintenance issues and options. Hocker asked that the Commission authorize payment of this charge from its Town Forest Maintenance Fund, currently showing a balance of \$15,156.00.

## **APPROVED**

*Brown moved that a payment of \$120.00 be made to Jeremy Turner from the Town Forest Maintenance Fund to compensate him for presentation services on May 20, 2013; second by Wood. There being no further discussion, the motion was put to a vote.*

### ***Unanimously Approved & Accepted***

Wood inquired as to progress made on identifying specific maintenance goals for the Town Forest. There was general agreement that the Smith Lot should be the focus of this year's efforts and Wood emphasized the importance of first establishing a clear goal for the area. Howard pointed out that while the larger section of the Town Forest has timbering potential, the Smith Lot is too small to be commercially valuable and Wood added that it would take 30 -50 years of management to realize any significant profit in any case. It was agreed that the area was best suited for recreational use and that the following goals were appropriate:

- Institute professional management activities, especially the culling of overgrown white pines in the southeastern section of the lot, to improve the health of the forest and to allow for the growth of hardwood trees such as sugar maples. Establish what profit, if any, the Town might realize from the resulting timber harvest.
- Create a scenic recreational trail system providing access to existing historical sites using any funds generated by professional timbering activities and volunteer labor.

It was agreed that Chair Hocker would submit a written request to Mr. Turner to develop a project plan incorporating these two goals. It was hoped that some economies of scale might be achieved as a result, such as the judicious development of logging trails for the timbering component that could then be used to advantage by volunteers in creating a trail system. Hocker stated that he would share this request with the Commission.

Watts noted that the Upper Valley Land Trust and the Upper Valley Trails Alliance would be able to assist with this project. Brown added that he would check into the National Park Service's Rivers and Trails program that provides design services and technical assistance.

### **Open Space Initiative**

Hocker noted that the minutes of the Select Board's most recent meeting reflected an acknowledgement of the Commission's decision to make up to \$3,000.00 available to cover administrative costs for the proposed Open Space Committee. He reported, however, that there had been no apparent action to date by the Selectmen to advance this initiative. Watts expressed concern that the Selectmen's timeline for the project might be considerably longer than the Commission had hoped. Hocker stated that the real value of the project was to provide the Selectmen with a comprehensive inventory of undeveloped land in Grantham that could be used in drafting the Town's mandated 2015 Master Plan revision. This revision will be fundamental to charting the Town's future by providing the blueprint for governance for the decade beyond 2015.

Wood referenced a previous suggestion that a Conservation Commissioner be appointed as an ex officio member of the Planning Board in order to facilitate communication between the two

## **APPROVED**

bodies and to create a stronger interface between the Commission's conservation objectives and the Town's planning process. Wood reported, however, that Selectman Connie Jones believed that such a plan would be unworkable since it would bring the number of voting members to six (6), leaving the Planning Board vulnerable to tied votes. Wood added that such an arrangement might be taxing for the Commissioner serving on the Planning Board because of the total number of meetings required. He stated that Jones had suggested an alternative plan of having the Commissioners share regular attendance at both Select Board and Planning Board meetings as a way of providing a structure for the Commission to clarify its priorities and concerns. With regard to the Open Space Initiative, Wood was in favor of this arrangement as an informal way to encourage both Boards to focus on the Initiative and the Master Plan revision. He proposed designating two Commissioners to share responsibility for covering Select Board meetings and two others to cover those of the Planning Board. It was agreed that Wood and Hocker would cover the Select Board and that Lefebvre and Watts would cover the Planning Board.

### **Planning for Conservation**

#### ***Wetlands Inventory and Protection Program***

Brown inquired if any progress had been made on the development of the wetland overlay district for Grantham. Hocker reported that he had been in touch with Conrad Frey, Chair of the Zoning Board of Adjustment, with whom the Commission needs to work on this project, but that no progress had been made to date. Hocker explained that the term "overlay district" does not describe a mapping exercise but rather constitutes a verbal description of usage restrictions, beyond those mandated by the State, which would apply to wetlands within a given area, in this case the Town of Grantham. Brown offered to assist with the legal aspects of drafting the document and Hocker expressed the opinion that with Mr. Frey's zoning expertise, the creation of the overlay district could be quite easily managed.

### **New Initiatives**

#### ***Invasive Species Inventory and Eradication***

Wood reported that he would be making presentations in early August to the Grantham Garden Club and at the West Cove B Special Place meeting in Eastman on the invasives eradication program underway in Eastman.

### **Perambulation Status**

Wood reported that work on the Plainfield line would probably begin in September.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **Flewelling Property**

Hocker reminded the Commissioners of their yearly responsibility to survey the Flewelling easement property (Sherwood Forest), an obligation which must be met despite the fact that the property is currently on the market. Hocker announced that he planned to schedule the inspection in late September or early October of this year, probably on a weekend, and will invite the owners of the property and the Selectmen to participate.

### **Conservation Handbook**

Wood offered to provide a copy of the *Handbook for New Hampshire Municipal Conservation Commissions* for each of his fellow Commissioners.

## **APPROVED**

### **Land Preservation Capital Reserve Fund Expenditure**

Because there exists a difference of opinion across the Town's governing bodies as to the circumstances surrounding a 2011 payout of \$60,000.00 from the Town's Land Preservation Capital Reserve Fund, Wood offered to try to reconstruct the history of that transaction to determine whether any further action might be appropriate. Those funds were used to purchase land for conservation and for use in the mitigation of wetlands impact caused by the construction of the Grantham Recreation Park. After a lengthy discussion, it was agreed that Wood should research the matter to try to establish a clear and evidence-based history. The object of this effort would be to settle the issue and to identify ways to avoid such misunderstandings in the future.

### **Clean-up Proposed**

Brown alerted the Commissioners to an area along the north side of Route 114 near the Transfer Station that is apparently a natural habitat for deer and many species of birds but is badly littered with broken glass, metal and other debris. He proposed that a clean-up be organized and Hocker said he would inform the Selectmen of the problem.

## **HANDOUTS**

None

## **ADJOURNMENT**

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

*The Commission voted unanimously to adjourn at 8:26 p.m.*

## **NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Grantham Conservation Commission will be held at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, August 19, 2013, in the Jerry Whitney Memorial Conference Room.

Respectfully submitted,

*Caroline Hoen*

Caroline Hoen, Clerk