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Town of Grantham Grantham Conservation Commission

MEETING MINUTES January 16, 2012

Kristina Burgard called the Conservation Commission to order on Monday, January 16, 2012, at 7:02 p.m. The meeting was held at Grantham Town Hall located at 300 Route 10 South in Grantham, NH.

Present: Merle Schotanus; Lindsey Dixon; David Wood; Joe Watts (*Alternate*); and Kristina Burgard (*Alternate*).

Absent: Richard Hocker; and Jeremy Turner

Members of Public: Robert “Bob” MacNeil

ADMINISTRATIVE

Approval of Minutes for 19 December 2011 Meeting

Burgard asked the Commission members if there were any additions, corrections, or modifications to the draft minutes for the December 19, 2011 meeting.

Schotanus requested the following corrections: page 2, 3rd full paragraph, line 6, delete the word “is” and insert “be”, and in the 4th full paragraph, line 3, change “only” to “prime”, delete “resource”, and after “it is” insert “a”; page 3, 1st full paragraph, line 4, after “Conservation” insert “Commission”; and page 4, 4th full paragraph, line 1, change “purposed” to “proposed.”

With no further corrections suggested, a motion was by Schotanus to approve and accept the December 19, 2011 Minutes as amended; second by Wood. There being no further discussion, the motion was put to a vote.

Unanimously Approved & Accepted

OTHER BUSINESS

Conservation of Lands- Bob MacNeil Lands

Burgard welcomed and recognized Robert “Bob” MacNeil of Yankee Barn Road Realty Trust.

Mr. MacNeil stated that as he’s advised the Commission in the past, he would like to put some of his land into conservation, and he is now about ready to take this action. He indicated that to begin the process, it would be beneficial for members of the Commission to walk the property

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with him so they can provide some guidance on what would make good boundaries for the conserved area, and the various means for conserving the land.

Mr. MacNeil noted that the area he has in mind is beyond the pond on the west side, including where Sawyer Brook runs through the property. The pond is permitted for up to 8 acres, and right now it is about 5 acres. Mr. MacNeil stated that they are re-thinking the size of the pond and may only enlarge it by about another ½ acre. He noted that the primary purpose of the pond is water storage, and to create a storage capacity so that when we get significant, flash floods, the pond helps to mitigate flooding of the road.

Mr. MacNeil noted that regardless of whether they only expand the pond by another ½ acre or up to the full 8 acres, the west side is pretty well set and is the area he'd like to conserve. It's a very pretty, nice piece of property. Burgard asked if he knew about how many acres he's looking to conserve. Mr. MacNeil said he wasn't sure of the acreage, but it can be defined pretty easily using a fixed point, then going due West to the property line and then hugging the stream on the other side. Dixon asked if the pond would be part of the conserved parcel, to which Mr. MacNeil replied it would not.

Mr. MacNeil suggested that the best way to pinpoint the size of the parcel for conservation is to walk and flag it. Schotanus asked what is the total number of acres in the flat that surrounds the pond. Mr. MacNeil stated that he thinks the whole flat is about ±18 acres. Schotanus asked if all that land is in current use, to which Mr. MacNeil replied that none of it is in current use.

Schotanus asked Mr. MacNeil if he was interested in donating a conservation easement or selling one. Mr. MacNeil stated that he is not looking for any compensation, and whether an easement or deeding the property over to the Town is the best way to conserve the property, he is not looking for any compensation. His goal is to ensure that this area of the property is undamaged.

Schotanus indicated that a third party easement holder, such as Ausbon Sargent or UVLT, might be an option here. Mr. MacNeil indicated that in such a case, he would want to make sure that the third party has the same interests regarding protecting the property and access issues. He knows Jeanie McIntyre at UVLT, and would not be adverse to their involvement, but still would want to ensure that he has some control over the terms to ensure the property is properly protected.

The Commission and Mr. MacNeil agreed that the next step would be for representatives from the Commission to join Mr. MacNeil in a walk on the property and discuss what makes the best sense in terms of outlining the area for conservation, and the options for how to conserve that area. The walk might also include a representative from UVLT. Dixon volunteered to take the lead on this project, and organize a walk some time in the next few months as the weather and schedules permit.

[At this point, Mr. MacNeil left the meeting.]

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Approval of Modifications to Wetlands Inventory Agreement

Burgard opened discussion on the proposed modifications to the Wetlands Inventory agreement with Ecosystem Management Consultants (“EMC”) as outlined in Dr. Van de Poll’s December 19, 2011 Memorandum. The Commission discussed the terms to be amended, including extension of the term to March 31, 2013 and the reconfiguring of the payment schedule and estimated increase of \$2,500, some of which is for additional work already performed and some added to the estimate for services that will be billed on a per hour basis.

Wood queried whether the Memorandum was intended to be the amendment, and indicated he would like see a change in language in the Timeline & Budget chart stating that the project was put on hold due to lack of volunteers and delayed notifications to landowners, as the real reason for the delay is that EMC missed the deadline for delivering the maps by three plus months. Burgard noted that there were some other minor language issues, such as the total number of WEUs, she’d like to see in the actual amendment, but the high-end changes to the term, payment schedule, and increased total were all fine. All the Commissioners agreed with this point, and Burgard indicated it was her understanding based on the form that this was a document to outline the changes to be made, and that an actual line item amendment, executed by both parties, would be prepared to effectuate the changes.

There being no further discussion, a motion was made by Schotanus to approve amending the terms of the EMC agreement as outlined in the December 19, 2011 Van de Poll Memorandum, and authorize Chair Hocker to sign an amendment to the agreement consistent therewith; second by Watts. There being no further discussion, the motion was put to a vote.

Unanimously Approved & Accepted

Schotanus further moved to approve and authorize payment of the December 31, 2011 payment of \$1,500 under the EMC agreement, as amended, and to authorize Chair Hocker to approve and pay future payments as they become due under the terms of the amended EMC agreement, with the proviso that this authorization can be withdrawn by the Commission at any subsequent meeting; second by Wood. There being no further discussion, the motion was put to a vote.

Unanimously Approved & Accepted

Planning for Conservation

Continue Planning for Wetlands Inventory project – Next steps

Schotanus asked if everyone had a chance to look at the proposed Public Outreach calendar sent out by Burgard this afternoon. All indicated they had not. Burgard noted that the document is essentially the same as what she provided to the Commission at the last meeting, just in calendar form, except she added some third party meetings that might be of interest and the deadlines for

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Eastman Living pieces. Schotanus asked if there are any additions to the calendar at this point. No one had any additions at this point.

Schotanus asked for an update with regard to landowner contacts. Watts reported that 85 update letters were sent out to the previously contacted landowners, and he's received 3-5 permission responses dropped off in the last few days. The remaining letters will go out sometime in February. Burgard noted that in response to the offer in the letters, 4 landowners had contacted her requesting copies of the maps for the wetland units associated with their properties, and all of these already returned forms granting permission to access their properties.

Schotanus asked Watts if there is a plan in place to deal with follow-up in the future for those from whom no response is received in the next few months. Watts indicated that the general idea was to arrange face-to-face meetings or telephone calls, but no definitive plan is in place yet. So far, our response is about 40%, all of which are positive except for one, and Dr. Van de Poll previously indicated that this is about the typical percent that respond in any fashion. Schotanus stated he believes it will probably be around the end of March before we know what the list of people needing follow-up will be, so we should plan to start doing follow-ups around that time. Watts indicated he agreed, and that these could be done in two waves like the follow-up letters.

Schotanus asked Dixon for an update on the volunteer front. Dixon stated there is nothing new regarding the volunteers, but she has started to fill out the portions of the evaluation forms that the Commission decided could be pre-populated for each wetland evaluation unit. This process has reinforced to her that it is best for these calculation-based questions to be pre-populated for the volunteers as it is a fairly involved process.

Schotanus asked if there was anything else. Burgard noted that as approved at the last meeting, she ordered 75 seedlings for \$60 from the State Forest Nursery for giving away to Grantham residents on a first-come basis at the Grantham Garden Club Plant Sale on Saturday, May 19, 2012, to promote conservation and landscaping for wildlife. This year all the seedlings are natives species, and subject to availability, will be 25 American Highbush Cranberry, 25 Common Elderberry (or if not available, Common Winterberry Holly), and 25 American Hazelnut. This giveaway will be promoted in the upcoming Conservation e-News.

Conservation of Lands

Cote & Reney Mill Lands

Burgard reported that Chair Hocker advised that he had not yet received a letter from Todd McIntire summarizing his proposal for conserving portions of the Cote & Reney land, but he did speak with Mr. McIntire late last week at which time Mr. McIntire indicated that he will try to get the letter and map out to the Commission soon.

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Wood asked what the next step would be once the proposal letter is received. Schotanus replied that it would be to take a look at the land and then prepare and send a recommendation to the Selectmen regarding the proposed conservation outcomes for the property, the characteristics and conservation values of the property, and the means and estimated costs to conserve the property. Wood asked who would coordinate the subsequent actions, and Schotanus indicated that he would be the lead person on this project.

Stevens Institute Lands

Burgard reported that Chair Hocker had not yet heard back from Stevens Institute of Technology regarding the property they own on Hartshorn Road.

HAND OUTS

None

ADJOURNMENT

Burgard asked if there was any further business. There being none, Watts moved to adjourn, and Wood seconded the motion.

The Commission voted unanimously to adjourn at 8:03 p.m.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be at 7:00 p.m. on February 20, 2012, in the Jerry Whitney Memorial Conference Room.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kristina Burgard

Kristina Burgard
Grantham Conservation Commission, *Alternate*