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Town of Grantham Grantham Conservation Commission

MEETING MINUTES

March 21, 2011

Chairman Richard L. Hocker called the Conservation Commission to order on Monday, March 21, 2011 at 7:05 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: Chair Richard (Dick) Hocker; Andy Eastman; Merle Schotanus; Jeremy Turner; Lindsey Dixon; Kristina Burgard (*alternate*); Joe Watts (*alternate*).

Absent: None

Members of the public: Robert (Bob) MacNeil, Pat MacNeil.

Approval of Minutes

Chair Hocker asked if there were any changes to the minutes of the March 2, 2011 meeting. There being none a *motion was made by Schotanus to approve the March 2, 2011 Meeting Minutes as written; second by Burgard.*

Unanimously Approved & Accepted.

New Business

Chair Hocker announced that he had received information from Martha Menard that she would like to resign as clerk for the Commission due to regular duties at the Town offices becoming more demanding and she felt she would not be able to keep up with getting the regular meeting minutes completed in a timely fashion. Chair Hocker indicated that Ms. Menard suggested that Burgard pick up the responsibility for the Commission's minutes. Chair Hocker stated that he would like to see Ms. Menard continue as long as she could, and asked the members for comments.

Burgard stated if Menard cannot continue keeping the minutes, she did not mind preparing them, but would want to be sure they are turned around in the prescribed time, for example, such that a draft is posted within six (6) days, if she were to take on this responsibility. Chair Hocker said his only concern is that he did not want to "burn" Burgard out because he felt her talents were far better directed to other matters and tasks of the Commission. Burgard said if Ms. Menard feels that she cannot continue, then for the record, she is willing to take on the responsibility for preparing the minutes.

Turner asked if Ms. Menard was doing the minutes on her own time. Hocker stated no, Ms. Menard is compensated for doing the minutes out of money in the Commission's operational budget for secretarial support. Hocker said that in the two (2) years prior to Ms. Menard taking over these duties, no one else showed interest in filling this role. Hocker went on to say that if Burgard is willing to take the minutes on if Ms. Menard

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cannot continue, fine, but he does not want it to become a chore. He will see if Ms. Menard wants to continue and explain to her why the Commission would prefer this.

Burgard stated that she'd like it to be clear that, as a Commission member, when she prepares Commission minutes, she does not get compensated, nor does she expect any compensation.

OTHER BUSINESS

Grantham Indoors current activities – Bob MacNeil

Chair Hocker stated the next order of business was Mr. MacNeil's presentation.

Robert (Bob) MacNeil introduced himself and his wife Pat MacNeil. MacNeil stated he was present on behalf of Yankee Barn Road Realty Trust to show the Commission what they are doing, where things stand, and where they are going. He explained that back in 2008 they had gone through the process and applied for and started construction of a pond. MacNeil stated that at that time, they submitted to the State, paid for, and obtained a Shoreland Protection permit to construct the pond.

MacNeil spoke of the significant flooding event that took place in July 2009, when they were in the process of excavating the pond. He stated the flooding resulted from both heavy rains and the blow-out of a blocked culvert above their property, and water came rushing down and instead of following the course of Sawyer Brook, and it came straight over and blew out the side of the pond. The pond site ended up with four (4) to 5 (five) thousand yards of silt, tree stumps, et cetera. MacNeil said it took them all summer to clean this up. Looking at what happened, the plans for the pond were rethought, talked over with the State, and then the pond plans were redesigned to adjust the alteration of terrain, change the locations of "spillways" to catch Sawyer Brook overflow during rain events, and expand the pond.

MacNeil said they thought this was it, but then again in October 2009 more flooding occurred, and it happened again. In response to that, they put twelve (12) inches of stone in the area that blew out both times, and this year, they plan to add topsoil over this and seed it. MacNeil showed the Commission pictures of the pond now, and further discussed the expansion plans, which he indicated the State has now agreed can move forward. MacNeil stated that he believes with the changes already made, and the expansion, the pond will help prevent flooding, and there will be virtually no chance of contamination from the pond getting into Sawyer Brook as the current design has water from the pond going through a good bit of natural filtration before it reaches any natural water body.

MacNeil stated his objective was to see if the Commission is okay with the project. MacNeil feels the State is comfortable with the expansion, and he has received a copy of the alteration of terrain from them, and will attend the Zoning Board meeting on April 28, 2011, plus the Planning Board meeting of May 5, 2011, and then he'll go from there.

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MacNeil indicated that if the additional 4 acres are added, they'd be adding another 20 acre-feet of water storage capacity that should help with potential flooding events.

MacNeil invited the Commission members to call him if there are any questions or if they were interested in viewing his property.

The Commission members thanked MacNeil for his presentation.

[Bob and Pat MacNeil left the meeting at this point.]

Forestry Services Agreement – Meadowsend Timberlands Ltd. – Jeremy Turner

Turner stated for those who don't know, he is also the Town Forester. Turner said that he had submitted a forestry service agreement for consideration by the Town to implement some planned, scheduled work in the Town Forest on the conserved Kimball lot at the end of Miller Pond Road. Chair Hocker distributed a map of the Town Forest showing timber stands and types, and confirmed this stand was on the 55-acre lot marked with hash marks on the map. Turner said the scheduled work is right around the warming hut and the old Four Corners area.

Turner said that particular stand has some similar components to an area on his own property he harvested last fall using a horse operation, which some members of the Commission came to see. Turner said the area around the warming hut is a very sensitive area, and includes a lot of good, young growth that needs to be preserved, so it is his opinion that horse logging, and hand felling by chainsaw, which is a low impact method of harvesting, is the best option for this scheduled work. Turner went on to say this is the first timber sale off Town property in several decades and forestry has certainly changed quite a bit since then.

Eastman asked Turner if this was the 1-D stand on the map. Turner said yes. Turner discussed horse logging in more detail, and indicated this stand was well-suited for this method, as it has some good quality, large pine, but also has a lot of younger age-class growth that we want to avoid damaging, and the site is not too remote. Horse logging is a low impact harvest method that will allow cutting out of most of the pine as well as conversion of the natural community so the current understory, including the young age-class natural hardwood and spruce/fir, can grow up. Other methods using heavy machinery can cause a lot more damage to the young growth, which we do not want to happen. Turner continued to explain various methods of harvesting and forest management principles.

Burgard asked when Turner is proposing to do this work. Turner stated that work on this stand was scheduled for last year in the Forest Management Plan but everything got pushed back. Chair Hocker confirmed this. Turner stated that the work would be done this summer. Turner said the ability to get up to that lot is quite challenging, and to go forward with the harvest, a small amount of money would need to be spent to open up access for a small truck into the area to facilitate transport into and out of the area.

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Eastman said that Burgard and he were discussing possible public education things to hold in May, and he feels it would be interesting to take people in there and show them what the plan is, and maybe in the summer, to have a time the public can witness the harvesting. Turner felt that was a great idea. Schotanus asked if an orientation could be scheduled in May. Turner stated yes. All agreed scheduling a public walk to this part of the Town Forest in May would be a good idea, and there was a discussion of proposed timing for the walk.

There being no more questions, Chair Hocker suggested that a motion should be made in order to record the Commission's support for this timber harvest effort.

Motion by Schotanus to endorse Jeremy Turner's proposed forestry efforts on the Kimball lot as described; second by Watts.

Approved Unanimously by the members voting, with Jeremy Turner abstaining from the vote.

Turner requested that the Commission make an effort to have clarified where the authority lies with regard to management decisions for Town Forest property. He indicated he is unsure whether this property and the Smith lot, are in the Town Forest, but both need to be. Hocker stated that he believes in 1990 the Town voted to designate a Town Forest and that designation included this lot, and he's seen documentation on it.

A discussion between Hocker, Schotanus, and Turner ensued regarding the ramifications of Town Forest designation. Schotanus confirmed this property is designated as Town Forest. Turner asked why then our Commission doesn't have management authority for it, as the commissions in all the other towns he works with do. Hocker stated that he could not answer that question at this time, but at this point, the paperwork submitted for the proposed logging is with Town Administrator Newton, who said it will go to the Town attorney. Schotanus suggested that the Commission send a letter to the Selectmen, including references to the relevant NH statutes, in order to clarify and resolve the issue of with whom management responsibility and authority for the Town Forest lies. All agreed that steps should be taken promptly to resolve this matter with the Selectmen.

Planning for Conservation

Continued Planning for Wetlands Inventory project – Next steps:

Schotanus said the first payment to Rick Van de Poll for the Wetlands Inventory work has been made, and Dr. Van de Poll is now in the processing of doing the mapping. Schotanus said that Dr. Van de Poll has sent a list of possible dates for volunteer training in May 2011, and that the timing for follow-up landowner permission letters needs to be addressed.

With regard to the landowner permission letters, Schotanus reported that Dr. Van de Poll indicated that the letters should wait to go out until most of the mapping is done, which should be around late April. Schotanus suggested that the Commission go ahead and finalize the letter language so that they can go out as soon as Dr. Van de Poll's mapping

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work is done and the wetlands we actually need to visit are identified. Burgard will resend the current draft to everyone, and comments and revisions will be coordinated by Watts.

Schotanus directed the Commission's attention to the proposed dates for volunteer training. The members discussed the proposed dates and their availability, and settled on the following dates:

- Monday, May 9, 2011, 7-9pm at Town Hall (indoor session);
- Thursday, May 12, 2011, 1-5pm, place TBD (field session);
- Saturday, May 14, 2011, 9-11am, place TBD (indoor session) & noon-4pm, place TBD (field session).

Chair Hocker stated he already booked the lower level of Town Hall for May 9th, and he will confirm that it can be used the morning of May 14th. The times for the all day session on May 14th are tentative pending confirmation by Dr. Van de Poll. Chair Hocker volunteered to check with Dr. Van de Poll regarding confirming the dates, the times for the May 14th sessions, and how many sessions each volunteer must attend in order to be qualified to perform evaluations. Once the details are confirmed, Dixon will get an email out to the volunteers and then send a reminder closer to the training dates.

Schotanus asked the Public Outreach committee for an update. Burgard and Eastman updated the Commission on the schedule for educational posters, updates to the website including posting the text of the educational posters, planned public education pieces relating eco-friendly gardening, maintaining healthy watersheds, proper disposal of prescription drugs, and vernal pools. Burgard reported that as discussed at the last meeting, she is taking a free vernal pool class at UNH Cooperative Extension, and then she and Eastman are going to lead a public vernal pool walk in the Reney Memorial Forest the afternoon of April 23rd. The Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests has endorsed the walk, and they will advertise it on their Things to Do calendar.

Burgard noted that May is American Wetlands Month, and as Eastman noted earlier, they've been discussing things to do that month to raise public awareness. Following up on the Town Forest discussion, Schotanus suggested going ahead and setting a date for the Town Forest public walk. After some discussion, it was agreed that a Town Forest Public Walk, focusing on the Kimball lot, will be led by Turner and tentatively will be offered on May 7th, beginning at 10am, subject to Turner confirming his availability.

Burgard indicated that in May, additional educational pieces will be posted on the website and will focus on what people can do in their homes and yards.

Burgard noted that a number of people at Town Meeting asked if the Conservation Commission would do anything more permanent to remember residents who contributed significantly to conservation efforts in Town and who have passed away. She said one idea is to identify and get permission to construct a memorial garden in a prominent location, for example, ask the Recreation Committee if there is an area at the Park where we could construct a memorial wetlands garden after construction of the new field is

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done. This would not only provide a good location to memorialize these residents, but could also potentially function as some wetlands mitigation on the Park property. The members liked this idea, and Burgard indicated she will begin some planning and explore the idea in the coming months.

Burgard noted that another awareness idea for May is to order tree seedlings from the State Nursery (which are pretty inexpensive) and give them away to Grantham residents sometime in May. This would raise wetlands awareness, but also promote conservation by residents on their own properties. Ideally, we'd try to select seedlings that are native wetlands species or a beneficial for wildlife, but can also grow in less wet conditions so they are more broadly appealing. Burgard noted that the Springfield Conservation Commission is giving away crabapple trees from the State Nursery. The members discussed the idea and how it would be implemented, and it was agreed it was a good idea and promotes conservation in Town. Burgard will work with Eastman and Turner to select one or more seedling varieties, and schedule the give-away in May sometime, perhaps in conjunction with the Garden Club's plant sale.

Eastman made *a motion to authorize expenditure of sixty dollars (\$60.00) to purchase seedlings to be given away to Grantham residents; seconded by Turner.*
Approved Unanimously.

Schotanus addressed two more matters. First, he indicated that currently four members are signed up for the April 9th Saving Special Places conference at Kearsarge High School, and inquired if anyone else will be attending. Hocker indicated he might be going. There was discussion regarding the logistics for the meeting.

Schotanus also addressed the Landowner Conservation Options workshop being offered UNH Cooperative Extension, and co-sponsored by the Commission, UVLT, and Ausbon Sargent, on April 27th from 7-9pm at Town Hall. This looks like it will be a very good workshop, and we should do some promotion in Town to get more landowners to attend. Burgard and Eastman will put this on the Community Calendar, post the flyer on our website, and draft a piece for the ListServ Grantham News. Schotanus also suggested that the Commission set up a display table at the workshop, and the members agreed this should be done.

Eastman informed the Commission that he received a list of questions from Dr. Van de Poll resulting from his first roadside visits in connection with the Wetlands Inventory, most of which relate to inconsistencies in the marking of roads. Eastman said there seemed to be some disagreement of the marking of road signs in Grantham. Eastman said after contacting the Selectmen's office and comparing how wording is in property deeds and on street signage, there are definitely inconsistencies. He contacted Town Administrator Newton, and she will look into the matter and respond to Dr. Van de Poll's questions.

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Grant Effort – NH ARMS Program Pre-Proposal activities

Burgard stated she felt there was a misunderstanding regarding the possible submission of a pre-proposal for an ARMS grant. The idea of the submission is separate from Town's need for the mitigation. The idea would be to speak with UVLT or Ausbon Sargent and work with them to conserve some property in Grantham, and propose at least part of the money comes from an ARMS grant. We discussed the three (3) Hastings properties in connection with this, and at least one property of these, the one by Springfield, would be ideal for this as this property appears to satisfy many criteria the ARMS committee looks for in giving grant money, and it is a critical, vital property for conservation and preservation to the Town.

Chair Hocker stated that that particular property already has cross-country trails in place and physically there is no way of getting across this property without crossing someone else's land, though there may be a right-of-way. Hocker suggested this property might be an option for Eastman Community Association, and he and Eastman discussed this with Eastman Recreation this past Friday.

Burgard stated that the parcel that's 97 acres appears to have some wetlands on it, but it would need further evaluation to see the extent and functions and values of those wetlands. So, it too might be eligible for consideration of an ARMS grant to preserve it. Turner stated that this parcel does have a lot going for it and it's nestled within a very un-fragmented area and abuts existing conservation deeded land. Chair Hocker and Commission members continued discussion. Schotanus indicated that UVLT proposed two dates to come talk with the Commission and any other interested parties, such as the Selectmen and Recreation Committee, to discuss wetlands mitigation and other issues. The date selected was April 7, 2011, starting at 6:30pm at Town Hall.

Chair Hocker asked Burgard at what point in time there will be clear authority for the Selectmen to expend from the Land Preservation Capital Reserve Fund. Burgard replied she does not know whether or not Town Administrator Newton has heard back from DRA regarding confirmation that, if the Town holds a Special Meeting seeking authority to expend funds from the Athletic Fields Capital Reserve and they want to do the same for the Land Preservation Capital Reserve, that this would be a duly warned meeting pursuant to RSA 41-14-c at which a warrant to adopt RSA 41:14-a can also be presented, and no petition to the courts to present that warrant at the Special Meeting would be needed. Burgard indicated that assuming DRA confirms that's the case, then it is her understanding that the Selectmen intend to present a warrant article to adopt NH RSA 41:14-a, as well as warrant articles adding them as agents to expend on both the Athletic Fields and Land Preservation Capital Reserve Funds, at a Special Meeting. Then, if both the warrant adopting RSA 41-14-a and the one appointing the Selectmen as agents to expend on the Land Preservation CRF are adopted at the Special Meeting, the Selectmen would have authority to use those funds to acquire land within the purpose of the CRF by following the procedures set forth in RSA 41-14-a.

Burgard noted that she has some concern about presenting proposed changes to the Land Preservation CRF at a Special Meeting because as of Town Meeting, the Commission

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was not contemplating any expenditure of those funds right way, and that was conveyed at Town Meeting. Thus, if the Selectmen do present such changes at a Special Meeting, it needs to be made clear to the public why the Selectmen are now requesting the flexibility to access the Land Preservation CRF funds. Specifically, because it may be necessary for the Town to purchase and conserve property in order to address a wetlands permit mitigation requirement arising from proposed destruction of wetlands at the Recreation Park in order to build the new athletic field, and there are currently no accessible funds to make such a purchase in the coming fiscal year.

Turner noted that it is important for the Commission to be careful with the use of the terms “preservation” and “conservation”, as they have different meanings. There was some discussion of the purpose of the Land Preservation CRF, and Burgard indicated that it was her recollection that despite its name, the stated purpose for this CRF in the warrant article was for the purchase of Grantham property deemed vital to conservation and preservation.

Land Acquisition – Status

Chair Hocker turned discussion to the three (3) lots of interest that the Commission has been reviewing, and indicated it is not clear what next steps are at this point without further input from Town Administrator Newton. He will follow up with her regarding these properties. He noted that Eastman may have some interest in one of the properties.

Hocker also said that he had called Stevens Institute and spoke with Dawn DeSilva regarding the property Stevens owns on Hartshorn Road (232-009). Ms. DeSilva is just picking up responsibility for this matter so wasn't able to discuss at length, but Hocker informed her of the extensive forest harvesting that occurred on the property about five (5) years ago, and mentioned a number of conservation options that Stevens might consider for this property. Conservation of this lot might be a catalyst for conservation of larger adjoining lots.

Burgard returned discussion to the three commonly-owned properties and sought confirmation that the owner wants a conservation outcome for all three (3) properties. Chair Hocker confirmed that she is very interested in selling these outright to the Town for conservation. Burgard indicated that all these properties have high conservation value, but in particular, the property on the Springfield line is an extremely high value conservation prospect in terms of water resource & wildlife habitat protection as it has multiple types of wetlands, is part of the low yield aquifer, and upland of the only high yield aquifer in Town. So irregardless of any other potential purposes such as recreation, as the owner wants a conservation outcome by selling to the Town, we should do everything we can to make it clear to the Selectmen how important it is for the Town to work towards buying and conserving that property. Burgard suggested that the Commission should make another attempt to educate the Selectmen on this matter, and get everything clarified about how the Town might proceed on all three (3) of these properties, preferably as soon as possible to keep open the chance to submit a pre-proposal for ARMS grant funds by the April 30th deadline in order to potentially get grant funds for some of the costs associated with conserving one or more of these properties.

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Schotanus inquired about the source of the ARMS funds in our watershed that are available for grants this year. Burgard replied that they came from the project for building the new school in Lebanon, off Exit 17, and for construction work on the road along Mascoma Lake in Enfield. The functions and values that were lost on these projects were moderate wildlife habitat, fish and wildlife habitat, sediment/toxicant retention, shoreline stabilization, and recreation.

Schotanus concurred that the long view needs to be taken with regard to this, that is, the Town needs to do everything it can to conserve the Bog Brook area, which is so critical to so many resources of the Town. The members all agreed.

HANDOUTS

Map of Town Forest

AJOURNMENT

There being no further business Burgard moved to adjourn and second by Eastman.
The Commission voted unanimously to adjourn at 9:11 p.m.

The next meeting will take place on April 18, 2011 at the Jerry Whitney Memorial Conference Room.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kristina Burgard

Kristina Burgard
Grantham Conservation Commission, Alternate

GCC - 03/21/2011 MEETING: HANDOUT

