

APPROVED

Town of Grantham Grantham Conservation Commission

MEETING MINUTES OCTOBER 20, 2014

Chairman Sheridan Brown called the Grantham Conservation Commission to order on Monday, October 20, 2014 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: Chairman Sheridan Brown; Susan Buchanan; Dick Hocker; Connie Howard; David Wood; and Caroline Hoen, Clerk

Members of the Public: David Beckley; Laura Nagy

ADMINISTRATIVE

Approval of Minutes for 15 September, 2014 Meeting

Chair Brown asked if there were any additions, corrections, or modifications to the draft minutes for the September 15, 2014 Public and Non-Public meetings. Buchanan requested that on Page 1 under the heading "Present", second line, the word "Alternate" be removed; and on Page 2, under the heading "Approval of Payout to NHACC", seventh line, the name "Wood" be deleted and re-inserted in parentheses after the word "abstention"; and also on Page 2, under the heading "Open Space Committee Report", ninth line, that the sentence "Brown expressed concern that the Commission's consent to fund the Open Space Committee might have been poorly timed." be deleted; and on Page 3, under the heading "Next Meeting", second line, that the date "November 17" be deleted and the date "October 20" be inserted. Brown requested that on Page 3, under the heading "Contract Review", third line, after the word "acquisition", the words "Unanimously Approved" be added; and also under the heading "Contract Review", line 5, that the words "Following proper vote," be deleted. Brown then asked if there were any further changes to be made.

There being none, a motion was made by Buchanan to approve and accept the September 15, 2014 Public minutes as amended and the September 15, 2014 Non-Public minutes as written; second by Hocker. There being no further discussion, the motion was put to a vote.

Unanimously Approved & Accepted

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NEW BUSINESS

Approval of Payout for NH Association of Conservation Commissions 2015 Membership Dues

A motion was made by Wood to pay the 2015 membership dues for the New Hampshire Association of Conservation Commissions in the amount of \$270.00, this sum to be drawn from the Conservation Commission's Operating Budget; second by Hocker. There being no further discussion, the motion was put to a vote.

Unanimously Approved & Accepted

OTHER BUSINESS

Consideration of Candidates for Conservation Commission Alternate Member Positions

Dave Wood introduced Dr. Laura Nagy, a seventeen year Eastman resident, as a possible candidate to fill one of two alternate member vacancies on the Conservation Commission. Brown, Wood and Hocker provided a general description of the Commission's mandate and responsibilities and Nagy outlined her background in journalism/communications and in ecology/conservation biology with a focus on New England forest systems. She is currently writing a book and is planning to return to teaching. Wood mentioned that she had already participated in a Commission-sponsored perambulation of one of the Town boundaries. Brown explained that the appointment process would involve a recommendation by the Commission, with the actual appointment to be made by the Selectmen. Nagy stated that she is interested in serving the community as a member of the Commission and that she would make a decision as to her availability within a week. Buchanan announced that a second possible candidate had withdrawn her name from consideration.

Flewelling Conservation Easement Property

Hocker reported that he and Buchanan had made the requisite annual perambulation at the Flewelling property. He raised ongoing concern that the current owners of the 845 acres under conservation easement were not observing many of the terms of that agreement. This property should be open to the public for outdoor activities such as hunting, fishing, skiing, snowshoeing and hiking, but access is very limited and trails poorly maintained. Further, there is signage on the property apparently intended to discourage the public's use of it. Neither the Selectmen nor the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (DES) has been willing to enforce the terms of the easement. The owners' recent plans for timbering activities on the property have not been enacted, presumably because of the current weight limit on the Miller Pond Road bridge over which logging trucks would have to travel. Various strategies for bringing the owners to account were touched on and Chair Brown recommended that the Commissioners review the easement agreement before taking up possible courses of action at its next meeting. He pointed out that neither the Commission nor DES has enforcement authority and that ultimately it would be up to the Selectmen as to what, if any, action should be taken against the owners to enforce the terms of the easement.

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Parasite Threat: Emerald Ash Borer

Brown inquired as to the existence of stands of ash trees on publicly held land in Grantham, citing the potential danger to them from the emerald ash borer, a parasitic insect that has been found in Canterbury and other areas in New Hampshire. He noted that information sessions regarding this parasite would be offered by the UNH Cooperative Extension and the Ausbon Sargent Land Preservation Trust. He said he would forward an internet link providing further detail about the problem. Hocker stated that there were significant numbers of ash trees in Eastman and Wood observed that these should be monitored. David Beckley mentioned that a different parasite had already compromised several ash trees in Grantham's Dunbar Hill area.

Open Space Committee Update

Buchanan reported that the Open Space Committee had had its most productive meeting to date in early October and might possibly be ready to report out at the March, 2015 Town Meeting. This Committee is working to develop list of undeveloped properties rated as to their value to the Master Plan goal of preserving the Town's rural character. The list is designed to serve as a tool for determining the Town's interest in purchasing individual properties as they come on the market for sale. The Committee has refined its definition of "rural character," finalized a list of twelve (12) rating criteria (e.g. Farms/Fields, Woodlands/Forests, Ponds/Lakes, Scenic Vistas, Wildlife Habitat/Corridors, Cultural/Historical Sites), and is developing inventory profiles for each property under consideration, based on elements specified in the new evaluation system. They have also taken the decision not to survey the public at this time on this topic, since such an undertaking would slow their process considerably. Buchanan stated that the NH Land and Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP) would be publishing a report on November 1st to include a revision of its own criteria for the preservation of rural character state-wide. The Committee will be factoring that information into its own study. Finally, she stated that none of the \$3,000.00 put up by the Commission to fund the Committee had been spent to date. It was noted, however, that a request for reimbursement for professional map-making services in the amount of \$87.50 had been submitted to the Town Administrator by Committee member Craig McArt who is developing maps for this project. It was understood that this request should be paid from the \$3,000 fund. Buchanan invited the Commissioners to attend Committee meetings which are held at Town Hall on the first Thursday of each month at 8:30 a.m. Brown commended Buchanan and the Committee for the solid progress they had made.

Conservation Commission 2015 Budget

Brown noted that the Selectmen are currently working on the Town budget for 2015 and that the Commission needs to submit its annual request for operating funds by October 24th. In recent years an allotment of \$2,000.00 has been awarded. The rationale for requesting an increased amount was discussed, given the Commission's consideration of new outreach activities, trail building initiatives and possible added mailing costs in the coming year.

A motion was made by Wood to request of the Select Board a Conservation Commission budget allotment of \$2,750.00 for the year 2015; second by Hocker. There being no further discussion, the motion was put to a vote.

Unanimously Approved & Accepted

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HANDOUTS

None

ADJOURNMENT

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

The Commission voted unanimously to adjourn at 9:56 p.m.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Grantham Conservation Commission will be held at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, November 17, 2014 in the Jerry Whitney Memorial Conference Room.

Respectfully submitted,

Caroline Hoen

Caroline Hoen, Clerk