

APPROVED

**Town of Grantham
Grantham Conservation Commission**

**MEETING MINUTES
MAY 18, 2015**

Owing to Chairman Brown's late arrival, Commissioner David Wood called the Grantham Conservation Commission to order on Monday, May 18, 2015 at 7:08 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; Laura Nagy; David Wood; and Caroline Hoen, Clerk.

Members of the Public: Richard Kaszeta

ADMINISTRATIVE

Approval of Minutes for the 16th March, 2015 Meeting

Wood asked if there were any additions, corrections, or modifications to the draft minutes for the March 16, 2015 meeting, the April meeting having been cancelled. Nagy requested that on page 2, third paragraph, 9th line, the words "rehabilitated and trees to be" be replaced by the words "protected or." Buchanan requested that on line 11 of the same paragraph the word "Tow" be replaced by the word "Town." Wood then asked if there were any further changes to be made.

There being none, a motion was made by Nagy to approve and accept the March 16, 2015 minutes as amended; second by Buchanan. There being no further discussion, the motion was put to a vote.

Unanimously Approved & Accepted

NEW BUSINESS

Brookside Park Trail Improvements

Wood reported that he, Hocker and Nagy had walked through Brookside Park to assess the state of the old, overgrown trail system there. He distributed a map to show the location of proposed improvements. There ensued an extended discussion of five possible sites for the construction of a new ADA accessible foot bridge over Skinner Brook, during which the following points were made:

- the most favorable location for the bridge is on the left side of the current parking lot. Aside from the obvious convenience, this spot is close to a rocky area in the stream ideal for children's play.
- This location would dictate a twenty-four (24) foot bridge that would require crib construction to raise it to the level of the parking lot and to protect it from flood damage.

APPROVED

- The cost of a four-foot wide aluminum bridge and associated materials would be approximately \$5,140.00 and there would be significant labor involved in preparing a rock base for installation on the far side of the brook, along with crib construction.
- The possibility of building a second bridge further upstream in a quieter area of the park making use of some old bridge footings and effecting the restoration of an old landmark was discussed. This second bridge would give greater accessibility to the west side of the Park and could be designated as a second phase of the project. It was agreed, however, that this second objective could be included in grant applications.
- Brown expressed a preference for a wooden bridge over a metal one on aesthetic grounds and Wood pointed out that building a wooden bridge would be considerably cheaper but would require design work and much more skilled volunteer labor.
- Wood suggested that the timetable specify opening up all the trails this summer but Buchanan was confident that the parking lot bridge could also be completed by fall. Wood expressed concern about lining up sufficient volunteer manpower and suggested that use of a metal bridge would shorten the construction period.
- Mr. Kaszeta offered to review bridge plans and options to date.
- Nagy observed that if the bridge went up this year, the creation of an ADA accessible area on the far side of the new bridge could wait until 2016 but that it should also be included as part of the overall project on grant applications.
- The Student Conservation Association was mentioned as a source of volunteer labor and Nagy said she would check with them as to whether they could do an estimate of the cost of creating the ADA accessible area. The Youth Conservation Corps, the Upper Valley Trails Association and the National Parks Service's Rivers and Trails Conservation Assistance Program were mentioned as possible sources of volunteers and information.
- Brown emphasized that this project should be seen as part of a broader, comprehensive trails development program that had been encouraged by the Selectmen. He suggested that the pursuit of outside funding be carefully planned to deploy impressive project features wisely and to include a bid for matching federal funds through the New Hampshire Bureau of Trails.
- Next steps agreed to were: 1) Nagy to contact two sources to get estimates on trail construction costs, including ADA accessible areas. 2) Wood and Kaszeta to research design options for a wooden bridge and to determine the cost of building it. 3) Wood to contact Jamielynn Garland in the Grantham Recreation Department about forming a volunteer workforce, perhaps to include members of the local Boy Scout troupe and of the Blue Mountain Snow Dusters. 4) Brown to talk to Town Administrator Melissa White about the status of the project and to ensure that liability issues associated with volunteer labor are covered.

Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) Prevention and Ash Tree Inventory

Wood reported that Dode Gladders, the forester for Sullivan County, is of the opinion that the emerald ash borer insect is not yet active in Grantham and that the Town has five to ten years before EAB becomes a serious problem. However, in order for the Town to prepare and budget for probable action, Wood is recommending that a GIS database be set up now to inventory the Town's ash trees. He is particularly concerned that dead and dying trees may present a threat to vehicles and people along public roadways, in parking lots and around public buildings. He has accordingly been looking into the most economical way to develop the database and will keep

APPROVED

the Commissioners informed. Buchanan suggested that the Town forester should be involved in the management of the EAB threat and Brown noted that economies of scale might be achieved by combining the methods for the ash tree inventory with the effort to track invasive plant species of concern.

OTHER BUSINESS

Open Space Committee (OSC) Update

Buchanan reported that at the last Open Space Committee meeting on April 9, 2015, a brief executive summary of the inventory of Grantham's undeveloped properties was presented. She emphasized that the inventory provides data on each property, organized on spread sheets, but does not include any sort of evaluation of the properties' relative importance to the Town. She added that the Committee was looking for feedback on the project to date from the Conservation Commission in advance of presenting the inventory to the Selectmen. She invited the Commissioners to attend the OSC's next meeting on June 4th at 8:30 a.m. at Town Hall. She agreed to forward the executive summary and other materials to the Commissioners prior to the meeting. The suggestion was made that a representation of some of the data in graph form would be helpful.

Grantham Conservation Commission Vacancies

Two Alternate GCC seats remain open. The Commissioners welcomed Richard Kaszeta, a mechanical engineer, a 16-year resident of Grantham and a frequent civic volunteer, to the meeting and expressed their appreciation of his interest in serving with them and his excellent qualifications for doing so. Brown agreed to proceed with a recommendation to the Selectmen for Mr. Kaszeta's appointment. Buchanan also stated that she hopes to introduce another possible candidate at the next Commission meeting. The individual in question is a Grantham Village School parent and substitute teacher with a degree in geography and earth sciences and a previous career in the airline industry. She is well known in the GVS community.

Report on Area Conservation Meetings

Nagy reported on having attended the *Saving Special Places* conference, the state's annual land conservation meeting. It was held in April in Weare, NH and attended by some two hundred people. One workshop she attended focused on ADA access to public lands and included the warning that mandates regarding accessibility would soon be applying to municipal public areas, as well as to state and federal parks. An information book on implementing ADA accessibility in public outdoor recreation areas was provided. In May, Nagy also attended a grant writing workshop sponsored by the New Hampshire Association of Conservation Commissions which provided excellent information on grant writing strategies and potential funders. She was optimistic that the Commission could develop the methods and materials needed to raise money from outside sources for local conservation projects. She suggest the Commission develop a wish list of projects along with "boiler plate" text so that applications could be put together quickly as grant money becomes available.

Old Home Day

Brown asked for suggestions for a Commission sponsored activity at the Grantham Old Home Day celebration on July 4th.

APPROVED

Land Acquisition Opportunity

Hocker requested that the Commission reconsider the purchase, on behalf of the Town, of a previously discussed 24-acre property on Leavitt Hill Road that may have come down in price. The property is currently appraised at \$31,000. He asked for the Commission's approval to contact the owner to get a sense of what sort of deal might be struck. The property could be added to the Town's inventory of conserved lands, especially since it is surrounded by the Flewelling easement property on three sides, or it could be used at some future date as mitigation for Town use of wetland areas, in accordance with NH Department of Environmental Services rules. Buchanan pointed out that the land could be of value to the Town in safeguarding the wildlife corridor that is a feature of Grantham's Master Plan.

HANDOUTS

None

ADJOURNMENT

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

The Commission voted unanimously to adjourn at 9:09 p.m.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Grantham Conservation Commission will be held at 7:00 p.m. in the Jerry Whitney Memorial Conference Room on Monday, June 15, 2015.

Respectfully submitted,

CAROLINE HOEN

Caroline Hoen, Clerk