

APPROVED

**Town of Grantham
Grantham Conservation Commission**

**MEETING MINUTES
March 18, 2013**

Chairman Richard L. Hocker called the Grantham Conservation Commission to order on Monday, March 18, 2013 at 7:00 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; Merle Schotanus; Joseph Watts (Alternate); David Wood (Alternate); and Caroline Hoen (Clerk)

Absent: Lindsey Lefebvre

Members of the Public: Selectman Kenneth Story

ADMINISTRATIVE

Approval of Minutes for 18 February, 2013 Meeting

Chair Hocker asked the Commission members if there were any additions, corrections, or modifications to the draft minutes for the February 18, 2013 meeting. Schotanus requested the following corrections: page 3, 3rd full paragraph, end of line 11, delete the word “did” and insert “would”; and on page 5, 1st partial paragraph, line 7, delete the word “addendum” and insert “appendix”.

With no further corrections suggested, a motion was made by Watts to approve and accept the February 18, 2013 Minutes as amended; second by Brown. There being no further discussion, the motion was put to a vote.

Unanimously Approved & Accepted

OTHER BUSINESS

Planning for Conservation

Grantham Wetlands Inventory and Protection Program – Ongoing Activities

Schotanus made the point that, despite the failure of prime wetland designations to meet with voter approval at the March 2013 Town Meeting, the Commission’s Wetlands Inventory initiative had nevertheless realized significant long-term gains. First, the voters did approve the warrant article recommending the adoption of the Wetland Inventory Final Report map as the official Town wetlands map. This is of significance because the map gives Town officials a scientific platform for educating the public on the location and importance of wetlands and for encouraging public participation in their protection. Second, both the map and the report will enhance the Commission’s recommendations to the NH Department of Environmental Services

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(DES) on dredge and fill applications for construction projects on wetland terrain. The Commission routinely reviews such applications before forwarding them to DES for approval and now has the scientific data, and the identification of thirteen prime wetland candidates, to bolster its recommendations. The map and supporting data will also give DES valuable information in implementing their “No Net Loss” policy. Third, the map can be of real importance to the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Adjustment in rewriting the Town’s outdated shoreline ordinance. Schotanus proposed that a copy of the map should be forwarded to the Planning Board with a cover letter recommending its inclusion in the revision.

Schotanus also suggested that the official wetlands map be put on display at Town Hall, preferably next to the zoning map. Watts and Wood advocated that a second map showing property lot lines should also be displayed for informational purposes.

Regarding the designated wetlands warrant articles, Hocker referenced the serious procedural disagreement that had developed between the Planning Board and Selectmen on the one hand, and the Commission on the other, in the weeks preceding the 2013 Town Meeting. The disagreement concerned the proper legal procedure for moving a Commission-recommended warrant article onto the Town ballot, given the Commission’s status as an advisory body with limited powers. Hocker asserted that the Commission could not do its work without a clear delineation and broad acceptance of the steps involved in this process. He declared it a matter of some urgency that the question be resolved so that such a dispute could not recur and added that the current confusion is creating uncertainty throughout Town governance. There was agreement that the imprecise language contained in the pertinent RSA’s was at the root of the problem and several strategies to resolve this were discussed. One was to request opinions from the offices of the NH Secretary of State and Attorney General. Brown also cited the New Hampshire Bar Association as a possible source of information and offered to research these avenues. He cautioned, however, that without the institution of an actual court case, it would be difficult to establish a definitive interpretation of the RSA’s. Schotanus suggested that State legislative action might be appropriate, given that other towns have encountered similar problems. Such action would need to be initiated by one of Grantham’s two State Representatives who would submit proposed changes in writing to NH Legislative Services for formal drafting in advance of their consideration by the Municipal Affairs Committee. The Commissioners agreed that it was too late in the current legislative session to introduce such a statute revision and that doing so early in the 2013-2014 session would allow adequate time to manage the process appropriately.

New Initiatives

Invasive Species Inventory

Wood reported having spoken with Douglas Cygan, Invasive Species Coordinator at the NH Department of Agriculture, about appropriate methods for identifying and mapping invasives in Grantham. Cygan recommended focusing initially on stands of plants that could be identified from Town roadways and then recording their locations on GPS devices. Such an undertaking could be accomplished in a few days using four to six GPS devices, each dedicated to one particular species. When the collection process is complete, the plant locations would then be entered onto an invasive species map. Wood declared that a mapping initiative would only be useful if followed up by an eradication program and he elaborated on various methods that he had researched. He said he planned to organize the mapping component for this summer.

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Schotanus suggested that Wood write up an Invasive Species Inventory plan of action for the Commission to adopt. Such a plan would give the Commission a unified voice and a basis for communicating with the public. It was agreed that transparency throughout the process was essential and various means of publicizing the initiative were discussed. Brown pointed out that education on invasives would help residents to be more alert to their existence on their own properties.

Open Space Inventory

Schotanus introduced his *Open Space Protection Plan* proposal plus eight (8) appendices that he had emailed to the Commissioners in advance of this meeting. He reported that the document had been through several edits and that he had received helpful suggestions and feedback from many individuals and regional organizations with experience in open space conservation. He stated that he was seeking the Commission's adoption of the proposal as its official position on the development of an open space program for Grantham.

Wood suggested that a motion to approve the proposal be tabled until the next Commission meeting so that the intervening month could be used by the Commissioners to discuss it one on one with each of the Selectmen and Planning Board members. Schotanus clarified that the Commission's formal adoption of the proposal was a separate issue from its actual implementation. This point was accepted but Watts underscored the key importance of educating the public and Town officials, and of soliciting feedback and support at the beginning of the process rather than at the end. He observed that the connection between conservation initiatives and the enhancement of property values is not well understood by the public, resulting in erosion of support for the Commission's work.

A lengthy discussion ensued in which Hocker placed the proposed *Open Space Protection Plan* within the broader context of the Commission's mandate to plan for Grantham's future in a way that allows for development while preserving the Town's rural character and natural resources. He warned that the voters' demonstrated reluctance to adequately capitalize the Land Preservation Capital Reserve Fund, currently valued at \$80,000, has left the Town without adequate reserves to buy up important undeveloped acreage as it becomes available. This deficit leaves the Town exposed to the danger that land speculators and developers may be the ones to chart Grantham's future.

Wood raised the possibility that an alternative method of raising funds for open space purchases could be to ask the voters to authorize the Selectmen to issue bonds for the purpose of buying up undeveloped land. This strategy would enable the Selectmen to raise cash rapidly to take advantage of important opportunities as they occur. Hocker cited the Town of Hopkinton's success in passing a \$4,000,000 bond issue that allowed it to purchase open spaces critical to the character of that town. The Commission agreed that bond issues were an option worthy of serious consideration but that efforts to build the Land Preservation Capital Reserve Fund should continue as a way to provide the Selectmen with maximum flexibility.

Hocker expressed the hope that the Open Space initiative could be a driver for the wider effort to manage Grantham's growth in accordance with the dictates of the Master Plan. He reiterated the

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Commission's conviction that the initiative should be led by the Selectmen and concurred with Watts and Wood that education and consensus building were key.

A motion was made by Brown to adopt the Grantham Open Space Protection Plan proposal as the official statement of the Commission's goals with regard to open space conservation; second by Wood. There being no further discussion, the motion was put to a vote.

Unanimously Approved & Accepted

Schotanus reminded the Commission that it would need to provide the Selectmen with a list of possible candidates for an Open Space Committee and suggested that this list be sent together with the proposal and cover letter in advance of the Commission's presentation at the Board's meeting on April 10, 2013. He made special mention of the need for representation from Eastman on the Committee, and for a stronger interface generally between Town governance and the pool of talent available in Eastman. Various candidates were discussed and a draft list compiled. Schotanus agreed to convert the approved proposal and cover letter to PDF format for electronic transmission to the Selectmen but recommended that hard copies be sent as well.

Mr. Story observed that the Open Space initiative presented a golden opportunity to build awareness and support for the Commission's mandate and vision. He suggested that the Commission use its upcoming Open Space presentation before the Selectmen to advocate strongly for the concept of open space conservation and also to clarify the broad goals of the Commission and what it hopes to accomplish over the next five to ten years. He declared that winning the unanimous support of the Selectmen would be an important step to building public trust and awareness. He expressed concern that the Commission's goals are not well understood by some Town officials and by the public at large, and thought that efforts to correct this problem would be important to the Commission's success.

Perambulation Status

Wood stated that the perambulation narratives for the Enfield, Springfield and Croydon lines were complete and had been signed and delivered to those towns. Both hard and electronic PDF copies have been provided to the Grantham Administrator. The Plainfield line has yet to be completed and that project will be taken up this spring. Wood noted that the GPS readings for a number of the boundary markers do not correspond with the lines drawn on most maps and that this is not a result of GPS error. With the completion of the Plainfield line, the entire perambulation of Grantham's perimeter will be finalized and the reports will be delivered to the Secretary of State. Wood has informed the other four towns involved that he will communicate the discrepancy between GPS locations of boundary markers and map lines to the Secretary of State at that time. Wood indicated that these discrepancies involve a matter of a few hundred feet and occur in non-residential areas in any case, so the consequences to the towns are negligible.

NEW BUSINESS

Smith Lot Trail Development

Schotanus announced he had received an email from Russel Hirschler, Executive Director of the Upper Valley Trails Alliance (UVTA), expressing interest in assisting with trail development in

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Grantham. The Commission is a member of UVTA which provides trail building services including publicity. Schotanus mentioned earlier discussions of the idea of creating a self-guided trail on the Smith Lot and suggested that the UVTA's offer might provide the assistance needed to realize that plan. Hocker noted that there are a number of historical sites on the Smith Lot property and that a trail of this kind would be an enhancement to the community. Schotanus agreed to discuss the matter with Mr. Hirschler.

HANDOUTS

- 1) Upper Valley Land Trust announcement of March 23, 2013 Hike to Leavitt Hill Wetland
- 2) Ausbon Sargent Land Preservation Trust announcement of March 28, 2013 Commission Chairs Roundup Meeting
- 3) Upper Valley Land Trust announcement of April 2, 2013 Annual Gathering of Upper Valley Conservation Commissions
- 4) Corrected announcement of April 6, 2013 Saving Special Places Conference

ADJOURNMENT

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

The Commission voted unanimously to adjourn at 8:38 p.m.

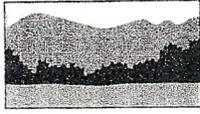
NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Grantham Conservation Commission will be held at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, April 15, 2013, in the Jerry Whitney Memorial Conference Room.

Respectfully submitted,

Caroline Hoen

Caroline Hoen, Clerk



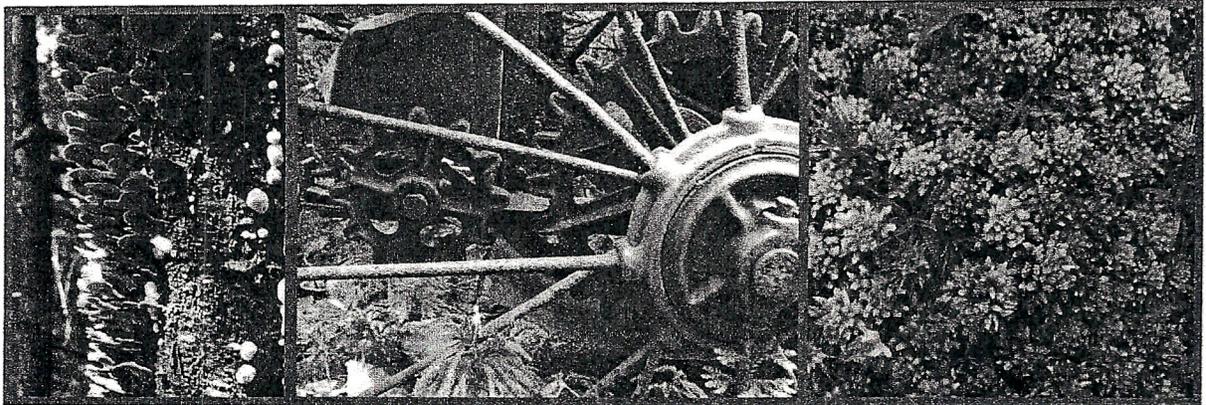
UPPER VALLEY
LAND TRUST

Hike to Leavitt Hill Wetland

Saturday March 23, 2013 @ 10am – 3pm (approx.)

Starting at Leavitt Hill Rd-Miller Pond Rd intersection, Grantham, NH (directions - link to map below)

Come explore with us! We will travel along historic Leavitt Hill Road, discover cellar holes, and hike through UVLT's property to find Leavitt Hill Wetland. This will be a freeform-style expedition. We invite you to share the company of UVLT staff and friends as we discover the little secrets of this 90 acre natural area which was acquired by the Upper Valley Land Trust in 2011 with support from the Town of Grantham and the Conservation Commission. While your senses will be tested, your fitness certainly may be too – please be prepared for uneven terrain, hilly topography, and likely icy and wet conditions (it will be mud season, after all!). There are no formal trails on this UVLT property, so bring a sense of adventure, pack lunch & water, and join us for an outing to celebrate the first official weekend of spring!



The beginning of the hike along class VI Leavitt Hill Road is approximately 2 miles (with about 600 feet of elevation gain!) just to reach the property. Once there, we will hike down to the wetland, make a loop, and return to Leavitt Hill Road for the return hike back to the cars. Total hiking distance will be *approximately* 5 miles and we expect the trip to take *approximately* 4-5 hours, aiming to return by 3pm.

Directions to Leavitt Hill Road [here](#) (enter your starting point in "A" and then click "get directions"). We will start where the unmaintained road begins, just off of Miller Pond Road after the highway underpass at 10 a.m. Parking is limited and likely will only be along the roadside of Miller Pond Road – please exercise caution! – Meet to carpool to the start from the gas station off Exit 16 of I-89 at 9:45 a.m.

This is a free event (though being a UVLT supporter makes you extra special!) – Registration is not required, but appreciated! Contact Sara Cavin at the Upper Valley Land Trust with questions and if you plan to join us: sara.cavin@uvlt.org or (603) 643-6626.

XFINITY Connect

rlhocker@comcast.net

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ASLPT - Conservation Commission Chairs Roundup March 28, 2013

From : oldnanofthemountain tds.net <oldnanofthemountain@tds.net>

Mon, Mar 11, 2013 08:26 PM

Subject : ASLPT - Conservation Commission Chairs Roundup March 28, 2013

To : Bea Jillette <beajillette@gmail.com>, Betsy Forsham (Sutton Con Comm) <bforsham@tds.net>, Bob Brown <robert@messerpond.com>, Bruce Allen <bruce.p.allen@gmail.com>, Geoff Lizotte (Wilmot Con Comm) <geoffl@live.com>, Kathryn Holmes (Newbury Con Comm) <omkat143@myfairpoint.net>, Linda Wilson <lindawilson.farm@gmail.com>, Mary Anne Broshek <mabandsadie@gmail.com>, Nancy Martin (Warner Con Comm) <nmartin@dhhs.state.nh.us>, oldnanofthemountain tds. net <oldnanofthemountain@tds.net>, Richard Hocker (Grantham Con Comm) <rlhocker@comcast.net>, Van Webb <vanowebb@gmail.com>, Debbie Stanley <dstanley@ausbonsargent.org>, Andy Deegan <adeegan@ausbonsargent.org>, Beth McGuinn <bethm@ausbonsargent.org>

Hi to all: I hope you survived: the Election, the Hurricanes, the Snowstorms, etc., and now it's MUD season!!

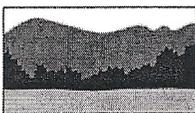
This is a reminder that our twice-yearly meeting of the Conservation Chairs Roundup will be at the Ausbon Sargent office on Thursday, March 28, 2013 from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. As usual, bring all your issues from your towns.

Welcome back to Mary Anne Broshek, who has returned to Andover and is again the Chairperson for the ACC. We're happy to have you rejoin our group, Mary Anne!

Please notify Nancy (^{nsaith} ~~Nancy@ausbonsargent.com~~ ^{org}) at 526-6555 whether you can attend or not as she so very competently supplies us with refreshments for the meeting.

Thanks!

Nan Kaplan
Chair



UPPER VALLEY
LAND TRUST

March 13, 2013

Dear Conservation Commissioners,

We invite you to join us at the 15th Annual Gathering of Upper Valley Conservation Commissions on Tuesday, April 2nd at the Center for Cartoon Studies in White River Junction. As in past years, our evening will begin with an informal meal. Come at 5:30pm to share a chili dinner and catch up with colleagues from across the region. Contribution of \$5 requested, please RSVP by March 29th to Anna Slack at anna.slack@uvlt.org or 603-643-6626 x 102.

The program will begin at 6:30pm and focus on two timely topics:



- Findings of a recent survey of public attitudes about quality of life, open space and land conservation in the Upper Valley
- Public access on conserved land - Questions and answers about how the 2011 Americans with Disabilities Act affects use of trails and conserved land.



We'll have some room for displays and a brief period for announcements, so if you wish to bring posters or handouts to share before the meeting, please let Anna know. We will conclude by 8:30pm.

Center for Cartoon Studies
Located in the historic Post Office building across the street from Hotel Coolidge
46 South Main Street
White River Junction, VT

Tuesday April 2, 2013 5:30 – 8:30pm

Parking is located behind the Twin State Typewriter & American Legion building at 93 South Main Street. Limited on-street parking. NOTE: The lot immediately adjacent to the building is not public parking.

We hope you can join us. We look forward to seeing you soon!

XFINITY Connect

rlhocker@comcast.net

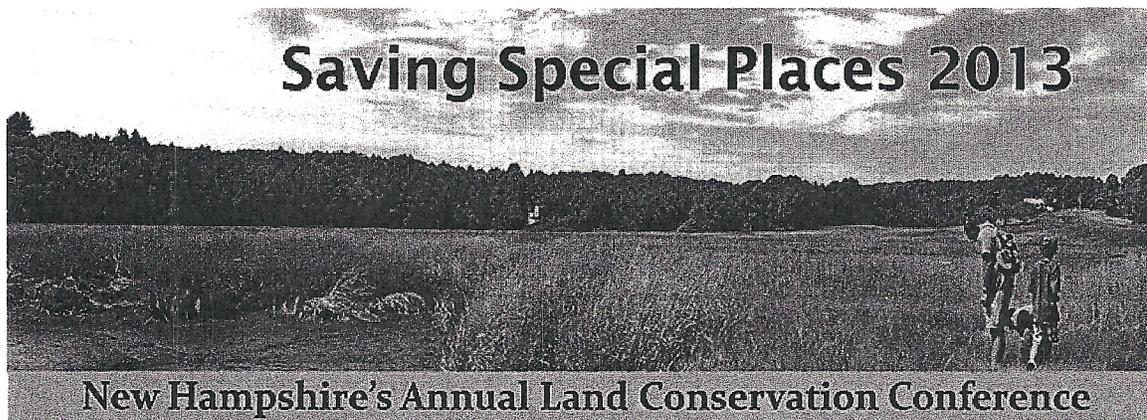
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CORRECTED! Saving Special Places 2013 - REGISTER NOW!

From : Saving Special Places Conference <amanda.stone@unh.edu>
Sender : Saving Special Places Conference <unhce@unhedu.ccsend.com>
Subject : CORRECTED! Saving Special Places 2013 - REGISTER NOW!
To : rlhocker@comcast.net
Reply To : amanda stone <amanda.stone@unh.edu>

Mon, Feb 18, 2013 08:01 PM

Having trouble viewing this email? [Click here](#)



Register Now!

Saving Special Places 2013

Saturday April 6, 2013

John Stark Regional High School
 Weare, NH

Registration is now open for the
 2013 Saving Special Places Land Conservation Conference!
 Join us at New Hampshire's largest land conservation training,
 education and networking event with 27 workshops and more than 40 presenters!
 Register by March 29th to take advantage of the lower \$60 fee.
 After March 29, the fee is \$75.

Visit the conference website

<http://savingspecialplaces.org>

*for all Conference details - Online Registration,
 Downloadable Registration Form, Table of Workshops,
 Workshop Descriptions and Presenters,
 Keynote Speaker, Directions and more!*

Download the Conference Postcard