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**Town of Grantham
Grantham Conservation Commission**

**MEETING MINUTES
OCTOBER 21, 2013**

Chairman Richard L. Hocker called the Grantham Conservation Commission to order on Monday, October 21, 2013 at 7:03 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; Connie Howard; Lindsey Lefebvre; Joseph Watts (Alternate); and David Wood (Alternate)

Absent: Susan Buchanan

Members of the Public: None

ADMINISTRATIVE

Approval of Minutes for 23 September, 2013 Meeting

Chair Hocker asked the Commission members if there were any additions, corrections, or modifications to the draft minutes for the September 23, 2013 meeting.

There being none, a motion was made by Wood to approve and accept the September 23, 2013 Minutes as written; second by Brown. There being no further discussion, the motion was put to a vote.

Unanimously Approved & Accepted

NEW BUSINESS

None

OTHER BUSINESS

Town Forest Management

Smith Lot Plan Update

With regard to management activities planned for this winter at the Smith Lot, Chair Hocker disclosed that a bureaucratic catch-22 situation had developed between the Commission and the Select Board. The problem centers on the fifteen (15) ton weight limit currently in effect for trucks using the Miller Pond Road bridge which provides access to the Smith Lot. The Selectmen are withholding approval of the plan until they can be assured that trucks removing wood products from the Lot will operate in

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compliance with the weight limit. The Commission cannot provide that assurance until it has a clear idea of the volume of timber to be harvested and forester Jeremy Turner, the Commission's choice to manage the project, has declined to make that determination until his preliminary Forest Services Agreement has been approved by the Selectmen. Hocker explained that this impasse was the cause of Mr. Turner's absence from this meeting where he was to have presented a second, more detailed Forest Services Agreement outlining the project methodology and specifying the volume of wood products to be removed.

A lengthy discussion of this situation and possible solutions ensued and the following observations were made:

- Erin Darrow, Town Engineer, did the analysis for setting the bridge weight limit. This limit is routinely relaxed for some delivery trucks, fuel trucks and the school bus.
- Partially filled trucks could be used to assure compliance with the weight limit, or a truck whose length exceeds that of the bridge.
- The volume of wood products being transported for the Smith Lot project would likely be minimal compared to that of other timbering projects. The number of trips across the bridge should be part of the calculation for determining whether exceptions should be made.
- An inquiry into the legal authority and guidelines for relaxing the limit was recommended.
- A clause specifying compliance with the 15 ton limit could be written into the Forest Services Agreement to satisfy the Select Board's concerns, leaving the method for achieving compliance to be worked out.
- Consistency in the application of the weight limit is important. The bridge needs to be replaced -- a project which had been under consideration by the Town for some time. Another way forward could be to pay Turner to finish his detailed plan for the Smith Lot and then to work to get the bridge rebuilt to accommodate large trucks. The forest management activities could then go forward as planned.

Hocker said he had asked Town Administrator Melissa White to invite Turner to attend the Select Board meeting on the following Wednesday, October 23rd, in the hope of resolving the issue. He recommended that if the Selectmen were still unwilling to sign the preliminary Forest Services Agreement at that time, the Commission should postpone the project until the bridge weight limit question could be resolved. He pointed out, however, that the Commission would still need to compensate Turner for services rendered to date and he stated that he would keep the Commissioners informed.

Open Space Initiative

Conservation Commission Volunteer

Hocker reported that the Selectmen, who have responsibility for appointing the Open Space Committee, have indicated that they would like to include one (1) representative each from the Planning Board and the Conservation Commission. A potential Commission candidate was identified. In response to a question from Lefebvre, Hocker estimated that the Committee would complete its work within a year. He noted that the

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resulting report would be an important element in the 2015 revision of the Town Master Plan with regard to the regulation of real estate development.

Planning for Conservation

Ongoing Prime Wetlands Activities: Overlay District

Hocker reported that the formulation of the Wetlands Overlay District was still in process.

New Initiatives

Invasive Species Project: Update

Wood reported that *Phragmites* eradication work is ongoing in Eastman and is currently focused on areas bordering Wellfield Drive and the eastern section of Road Round the Lake. He is exploring the possibility of using a commercial service to handle one large stand and is taking care to discuss the program with affected property owners.

Flewelling Easement Property “Walkabout”

Potential Development of Miller Pond Campground

Hocker reminded the Commissioners that an inspection tour of the Flewelling Easement was scheduled for the following Wednesday, October 23rd at 2:00 p.m. He reported that the old campground area is showing evidence of use and would need major work to be rehabilitated. He confirmed that the goal of this walkabout, beyond fulfilling the requirement for an annual inspection of the property, would be to assess the possibility of creating a Town swimming area on Miller Pond on the site of the campground beach. Grantham currently has no public swimming area. Hocker stated that a full inspection of the Easement’s boundaries would be deferred to a future date.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Hocker reported that he had been informed that the old dam at Butternut Pond had recently been removed by the State. He confirmed that the access trail to the Pond is a public thoroughfare.

HANDOUTS

Information flyers regarding the New Hampshire Association of Conservation Commissions 43rd Annual Meeting on November 2nd, 2013
(<http://www.nhacc.org/annualmeeting43/>)

ADJOURNMENT

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

The Commission voted unanimously to adjourn at 7:55 p.m.

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NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Grantham Conservation Commission will be held at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, November 18, 2013, in the Jerry Whitney Memorial Conference Room.

Respectfully submitted,

Caroline Hoen

Caroline Hoen, Clerk