

APPROVED

Town of Grantham Grantham Conservation Commission

SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES October 31, 2011

Chairman Richard L. Hocker called the special meeting of the Conservation Commission to order on Monday, October 31, 2011, at 7:05 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.

Commissioners Present: Chairman Richard (Dick) Hocker; Merle Schotanus; Lindsey Dixon; Joe Watts (*Alternate*); and Kristina Burgard (*Alternate*).

Absent: Jeremy Turner.

Members of the public: David Wood.

ADMINISTRATIVE

None

NEW BUSINESS

None

OTHER BUSINESS

Planning for Conservation – Status/Future Schedule for On-Going Wetlands Inventory Project

Chair Hocker indicated that the purpose of the special meeting is to discuss the current status of the Wetlands Inventory Project and possible modifications to the schedule for this project. Chair Hocker asked Schotanus to provide an update on the Wetlands Inventory Project.

Schotanus stated that Dr. Van de Poll just recently identified 54 wetland evaluation units, and that he began sending maps and other information needed to perform site visits on October 10th, with the last batch being sent just a few days ago. According to the original schedule, all evaluations should be completed by this time, and we should be tabulating the results and drafting proposed warrant articles, but instead, only a few wetland units have been visited and all this work remains to be done. Schotanus noted that as a result of delays in delivery of this information, we are down a number of volunteers as many head south or west this time of year. In addition, the loss of vegetation, onset of cold/inclement weather, and hunting season, all support modifying the schedule to compress it to two years, and picking up evaluations again in the Spring when the weather is better and many of our volunteers return to Town.

Watts noted that in addition, landowner permission letters could only be sent as the wetland evaluation unit information was received, and receiving permission is another hurdle to being able to go out and evaluate units on non-public accessible areas. The wetland units were received in four (4) batches, and letters have gone out to the first two batches, which was about 90 letters. As of today, we've received 27 responses, all granted permission to access except one and that person

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enclosed detailed information about the wetland on his property. Burgard noted that letters for the last two batches, the information for which was only recently received, have not been sent out yet and are being held pending the outcome of this meeting. Watts and Schotanus both indicated it would be best to wait to send those letters until some time early next year if the evaluation piece of the project is going to be shut down for the winter

Dixon noted that volunteers have already evaluated 3 wetland evaluation units on public land, and she has assigned four more for evaluation. As of today, there are now only 14 trained volunteers available to perform evaluations. Dixon has some concerns about the quality of evaluations done at this time of year. In addition, the volunteers have indicated they have a lot of questions and need more information in the evaluation packets, such as a watershed delineation map and points of reference on the maps to assist with locating the wetland unit. Schotanus also noted that a Town-wide map with all wetland evaluation units marked is also needed.

Watts noted that he has some concerns about whether Dr. Van de Poll has finished identifying all the wetland evaluation units.

Chair Hocker indicated that in light of all the circumstances, it seems advisable to shut down the evaluation of wetlands for now, and restart in early May 2012 at which time the wetland volunteers can be reconstituted and given a refresher training session. All in attendance agreed. Burgard noted that in the interim, the Commission could take the opportunity to add materials and information to each wetland evaluation unit package that will address the questions and concerns raised by the volunteers who worked on evaluations this Fall.

Dixon stated that she felt that some volunteers could and may want to proceed with the units already assigned to them; in particular, the volunteer teams assigned the Anderson Pond, Cole Pond, Eastman Lake, and Bog Brook wetland evaluation units. Burgard suggested that we let these evaluation teams know that they can proceed with these evaluations if they feel they can do a thorough job right now, but they also have the option to wait until the project restarts in May 2012.

There was some discussion about how the evaluation packages could be improved, and Mr. Wood suggested getting input from all of the volunteers who have performed or tried to perform evaluations to date. Dixon supported this idea, and proposed the Commission members informally meet with these individuals in the near future to get their specific questions, criticisms, concerns, and the like, so that she and Burgard can then compile a list of what is needed, and where necessary, request items from Dr. Van de Poll. The Commissioners all agreed with this, and a working group gathering will be scheduled some time soon, perhaps November 14th or 15th.

Schotanus noted that there should be a public outreach campaign to notify the public of the change in schedule, as well as some form or forms of notification to all the landowners, but before any of these occur, Dr. Van de Poll needs to be contacted. In addition, the contract with EMC/Dr. Van de Poll will need to be amended, if for no other reason than amending the schedule set forth in the contract. Watts, Dixon, and Burgard all noted that any changes to the compensation need to be based on additional deliverables, as the reason for the delay and change in schedule resulted from failing to receive the evaluation unit information in the early summer, as set forth in the contract.

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Chair Hocker stated that he would contact Dr. Van de Poll about the change in schedule, and he along with several other Commissioners would work on amending the contract with EMC/Dr. Van de Poll as needed.

HAND OUTS

None

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Hocker asked if there were any further business. There being none, Schotanus moved to adjourn, and Burgard seconded the motion.

The Commission voted unanimously to adjourn at 8:13 p.m.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be at 7:00p.m. on November 21, 2011, in the Jerry Whitney Memorial Conference Room.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kristina Burgard

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Grantham Conservation Commission, Alternate