

APPROVED

Town of Grantham Grantham Conservation Commission

MEETING MINUTES DECEMBER 15, 2014

Chairman Sheridan Brown called the Grantham Conservation Commission to order on Monday, December 15, 2014 at 7:10 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; and Caroline Hoen, Clerk. (Laura Nagy, normally an alternate member of the Commission, acted as voting member for this meeting.)

ADMINISTRATIVE

Approval of Minutes for the 20th October, 2014 Meeting

Chair Brown asked if there were any additions, corrections, or modifications to the draft minutes for the October 20, 2014 meeting. Buchanan requested that on Page 3 under the heading “*Open Space Committee Update*,” eighth line down, the words “a set of maps to be used in the new system” be deleted and the following words substituted: “inventory profiles for each property under consideration, based on elements specified in the new evaluation system.” Brown then asked if there were any further changes to be made.

There being none, a motion was made by Hocker to approve and accept the October 20, 2014 minutes as amended; second by Nagy. There being no further discussion, the motion was put to a vote.

Unanimously Approved & Accepted

NEW BUSINESS

GCC Winter Outreach/Public Events Planning

Brown asked for suggestions for an outdoor winter recreation event to be sponsored by the Commission. This would be an outreach project geared to families. Hocker suggested a two-mile outing from Miller Pond to Leavitt Hill and back, a route featuring several natural and historical points of interest. He recommended a mid- to late February date and suggested Town road agent Jeff Hastings be contacted about plowing to create sufficient parking. Brown, Hocker and Buchanan agreed to begin work with Town events planner Jamielynn Garland on this outing. In addition, the possibility of having the Blue Mountain Snow Dusters groom cross-country ski trails at the Town Recreation Park was discussed, along with the idea of maintaining the existing pond at the Park as a public skating facility. Brown also broached the idea of an indoor conservation event for families, perhaps involving a presentation on raptors that can be seen

APPROVED

locally. Finally, Brown asked Hocker to consider assuming responsibility for the creation of an online guide to Grantham's public trails, including descriptions of their distinguishing features. All agreed this was a worthwhile undertaking and Nagy offered to provide text for the guide.

Forest Notes Article Featuring the Grantham Conservation Commission

Brown stated that Dick Hocker and Dave Wood had recently been interviewed for an article in the December issue of *Forest Notes*, the magazine put out by The Forest Society. The article will focus on the work of three New Hampshire conservation commissions.

Town Trail Improvements in Brookside Park

Brown referenced Commissioner Dave Wood's December 11, 2014 email wherein he addresses the advantage to the Town of building a pedestrian bridge across Mountain Brook in the newly enlarged Brookside Park. The object would be to provide public access from the parking lot on the east side of the brook (off Route 10) to a planned trail that would run up the west side. He recommends the use of an aluminum Bailey bridge at a cost of \$6,513 (assuming volunteer labor is used), possible ways to raise those funds, and a specific location. Hocker observed that such a bridge would fill a second need as an access route in case of wildfire on the west side of the brook. He also noted that since the Commission funded the recent six and a half (6 ½) acre land purchase to enlarge the park, the Select Board should be approached to underwrite the bridge. Nagy raised the question of Town liability with the construction of a public bridge using volunteer labor. Buchanan recommended that support for the project be sought from the Town fire chief to build the case for its construction. Brown was in favor of leveraging funds from several sources. It was agreed that Hocker would speak with Town Administrator Melissa White before the Commission's January meeting about the prospects for the project and options for managing it. He would also consult with Fire Chief Jeremiah Fountain.

Conservation Commission Vacancies

Brown announced the recent resignation of Connie Howard from the Commission, bringing the number of current vacancies to two.

OTHER BUSINESS

Commission Reimbursement for Members attending the Annual Meeting of the NHACC

A motion was made by Hocker to compensate two Commissioners for their \$50.00 attendance fees for the New Hampshire Association of Conservation Commissions' 2014 Annual Meeting; second by Nagy. There being no further discussion, the motion was put to a vote.

Unanimously Approved & Accepted

It was noted that the Commission had no established policy for mileage reimbursement in situations where Commissioners have to drive significant distances to conservation-related meetings.

Sue Buchanan, who attended the NHACC meeting, reported that the focus had been on ways to involve youth and schools in community conservation efforts. She learned about several

APPROVED

strategies that could be implemented in Grantham. She also mentioned that information from the meeting was available on the NHACC website (NHACC.org) along with directions on how to subscribe to their newsletter

Open Space Committee Update

Buchanan announced that the Open Space Committee had designated Thain Allan as its Chair, Al Wilson as Vice Chair and Craig McArt as Secretary. McArt is leading an effort to draw up a standardized fact sheet, including map, for each undeveloped property to be inventoried. The goal is to have a fact sheet for each property completed by February 2015.

Annual Smith Lot Walk & Upper Valley Land Trust Report

Brown reported that a representative of the Upper Valley Land Trust had made the UVLT's annual inspection of the Smith Lot with Commissioner Wood and found the property to be in good order.

Commission FY 2015 Budget Request

Brown stated that he had met with the Selectmen regarding the Commission's request for an Operating Budget increase to a new total of \$2,750 and that the request had been favorably received. In addition, the Selectmen expressed particular appreciation of the Commission's work to enlarge and improve Brookside Park and of its agenda regarding trail enhancement, outreach events and information dissemination on conservation concerns. Further, they endorsed the Commission's consideration of public information sessions to promote understanding of a bonding strategy to underwrite Town purchases of conservation lands.

HANDOUTS

None

ADJOURNMENT

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

The Commission voted unanimously to adjourn at 8:30 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, January 26, 2015. (Please note that this date is a week later than the normal third Monday of the month because of the Martin Luther King holiday on January 19, 2015.)

Respectfully submitted,

Caroline Hoen

Caroline Hoen, Clerk