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**Town of Grantham
Grantham Conservation Commission**

**MEETING MINUTES
JANUARY 20, 2014**

Chairman Richard L. Hocker called the Grantham Conservation Commission to order on Monday, January 20, 2014 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 Richard (Dick) Hocker; Sheridan Brown; Susan Buchanan; Connie Howard; Lindsey Lefebvre; Joseph Watts (Alternate); David Wood (Alternate); and Caroline Hoen, Clerk

ADMINISTRATIVE

Approval of Minutes for 16 December, 2013 Meeting

Chair Hocker asked if there were any additions, corrections, or modifications to the draft minutes for the December 16, 2013 meeting. Wood requested the following addition: page 1, 4th line up from the bottom after the word “filed,” add “by Eastman residents.” Hocker then asked if there were any further changes to be made.

There being none, a motion was made by Wood to approve and accept the December 16, 2013 Minutes as amended; 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 Activities: Update

Hocker referenced an earlier agreement to invite forester Jeremy Turner to attend a Commission meeting to discuss his 2014 *Timber Harvest Preplan* for management activities at the Smith Lot (see below under “Handouts”). This discussion would include a review of the Plan’s details plus recent reactions to it from the Select Board. Hocker proposed that the Commission review the document at this meeting and then invite Turner to attend its February meeting. A discussion followed wherein questions for Turner were formulated. Hocker noted that the start date for implementation of the plan remains dependent on the Selectmen’s willingness to waive the 15-ton weight limit on the Miller Pond Road bridge to allow for the passage of logging trucks.

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Commission Liaison Activities with other Town Governance Bodies

Brown, who sits on the Zoning Board of Adjustment, reported that no meeting had been held in January. Watts, the Commission's liaison to the Planning Board, stated that he had been unable to attend their January meeting.

Buchanan, a member of the new Open Space Committee, said that the first meeting had been set for Thursday, February 6th at 9:00 a.m. at Town Hall. Her understanding of the Committee's mandate is to catalog all undeveloped properties of ten acres or more and to prioritize them in terms of their importance to the preservation of the rural character of Grantham, a core Master Plan value. She asked for the Commission's ideas on appropriate methodologies for fulfilling this mandate in terms of criteria to be used in evaluating properties and the formulation of an appropriate and objective rating system. She noted that it was entirely possible that not all Committee members would want to interpret the mandate from a conservation perspective. The Commissioners offered the following recommendations:

- Hocker suggested a review of the *Town of Grantham, NH Critical Conservation Lands Index* (CCLI) as a starting point. This Index was prepared under the auspices of the Commission in 2009 to provide a basis for future land conservation planning, Hocker reiterated the importance of the new Open Space inventory in developing the 2015 revision of the Town Master Plan, a responsibility with which the Planning Board is charged. The State requires this revision every ten (10) years as the Plan provides both a blueprint for Town governance and also the legal basis for certain administrative functions.
- Brown, who is an Outreach Committee member at the Ausbon Sargent Land Preservation Trust in New London, reported that the Trust is discussing holding a series of forums within their service area on the benefits of open space preservation both to individual towns and to the region as a whole. He suggested that the Grantham Open Space Committee might organize such a presentation at one of their meetings.
- Brown also noted that, with regard to the financing of open space preservation, there exists in New Hampshire optional authority for conservation commissions to spend money toward the acquisition of land by a non-profit without holding an interest in that land. Hocker suggested that the Commission had in fact previously adopted that authority and that there existed a precedent for its use in a transaction with the Upper Valley Land Trust. Brown further noted that a study of the high cost of Town community services for developed land relative to that for undeveloped land might be worth undertaking as a way of clarifying for the public the case for open space preservation. He asked if the use of Conservation Commission funds could be authorized to pay for such a study and Hocker responded that that would be a possibility.

Buchanan thanked the Commissioners for their assistance.

Planning for Conservation

Cleanup of Miller Pond Dam

Hocker circulated pictures showing the current abused state of the Miller Pond dam area on the

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Flewelling easement property. He recommended that the Commission consider organizing a work day to clean it up and remove debris. Such an undertaking would require permission from the owner of the property. Lefebvre recommended that the work be scheduled to coincide roughly with Earth Day in late April or early May.

Ongoing Wetlands Activities:

- Wetlands Overlay District

Hocker reported that the Overlay District document is still in production.

- Conservation Commission Summary of its 2013 Activities for the March Town of Grantham Annual Report

Wood thanked Lefebvre and Watts for their editorial contributions to the summary. The Commission members reviewed the newest copy together and additional changes were made.

- Shoreline Cutting Application Revision

Wood asked that the Commissioners review the latest revision of the Shoreland Cutting Application. A few additional recommendations for changes were made. Wood planned to incorporate these changes before submitting the new form to the Town Administrator.

- Wetlands Monitoring

Wood posed the question as to whether, given the chronic failure of the State Department of Environmental Services (DES) to provide adequate monitoring of the health of major local wetlands, the Conservation Commission should assume responsibility for this important conservation function. After some discussion it was decided that the Commission would not seek to establish a formal monitoring program but that individual Commissioners would conduct themselves as any responsible private citizen concerned about the health of Town wetlands would, by reporting abuse to DES.

Warrant Article: Land Preservation Capital Reserve Fund

There was agreement that the Commission would not seek to present a Warrant Article at this year's Town Meeting asking the voters to allocate funds to the Land Preservation Capital Reserve Fund. Routine funds for the Commission's annual operational needs would be requested as part of the Town budget process. However, Wood requested that the Commission return to the question of the warrant article at a future date.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Brown announced that the Conservation Commission Chairs Round Table would be held on Thursday, March 27, 2014 and that the Saving Special Places Conference would be on Saturday April 5, 2014 in Laconia.

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HANDOUTS

Jeremy Turner's *Timber Harvest Preplan for the Smith Lot* (see below)

ADJOURNMENT

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

The Commission voted unanimously to adjourn at 9:15 p.m.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Grantham Conservation Commission will be held at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, February 17, 2014, in the Jerry Whitney Memorial Conference Room.

Respectfully submitted,

Caroline Hoen

Caroline Hoen, Clerk

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**THE ECOSYSTEM
MANAGEMENT CO.**



Sustainable Natural
Resource Management



**Timber Harvest Preplan
for
Grantham Town Forest
SMITH LOT**

2014 TIMBER HARVEST PREPLAN

Prepared by:
Jeremy G. Turner
The Ecosystem Management Co.
P.O. Box 966
New London, New Hampshire 03257



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