

APPROVED

Town of Grantham Grantham Conservation Commission

MEETING MINUTES FEBRUARY 17, 2014

Chairman Richard L. Hocker called the Grantham Conservation Commission to order on Monday, February 17, 2014 at 7:06 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; Susan Buchanan; Connie Howard; Joseph Watts (Alternate); David Wood (Alternate); and Caroline Hoen, Clerk

Absent: Sheridan Brown; and Lindsey Lefebvre

Guest: Jeremy Turner

ADMINISTRATIVE

Approval of Minutes for 20 January, 2014 Meeting

Chair Hocker asked if there were any additions, corrections, or modifications to the draft minutes for the January 20, 2014 meeting. Wood requested the following corrections: page 2, 3rd line from the top, delete “a member of the” and insert “liaison to” and in the first bulleted paragraph, line 6, delete “Baord” and insert “Board”. 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 Buchanan. There being no further discussion, the motion was put to a vote.

Unanimously Approved & Accepted

NEW BUSINESS

None

OTHER BUSINESS

Town Forest Management Activities: Smith Lot Update

Chair Hocker welcomed forester Jeremy Turner to the meeting and asked him to give an update on the Smith Lot forest management project. Turner declared that the work could, in fact, not be undertaken in a cost effective manner until the logging trucks required for the job could be accommodated by the Miller Pond Road bridge. Hocker noted that the Selectmen, having

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declined to issue a waiver of the bridge's 15-ton weight limit for this project, have directed Town Administrator Melissa White to research funding sources for the bridge's total reconstruction, an undertaking which could take considerable time. Turner made the following points:

- Given the low value of timber on the Smith Lot, no significant loss would be incurred by deferring management activities for a few years.
- An estimated twenty (20) truckloads of timber products would need to be removed from the Lot to accomplish the management activities currently planned.
- Management activities would be designed for minimum impact on the terrain.
- The future construction of recreation trails could make use of skid trails built for management activities, but would likely require special permits and oversight for some aspects of their construction.
- Part of the forester's job is to assist the Commission in making environmentally responsible decisions regarding the development of the land for public use.
- The old orchard area (4.4 acres) of the Smith Lot has good soil and part of the plan is to open that part up and plant as many as one hundred (100) new apple trees to re-establish a significant, healthy orchard.
- Some of the Town's highest levels of invasive species exist in and around the Lot's gravel pit, including autumn olive, Japanese honeysuckle and glossy buckthorn. It would be advisable to eradicate these plants before beginning management activities since the disturbance involved would facilitate their expansion. Turner's firm has a forester on staff licensed to carry out such eradication projects.

Buchanan proposed that the Commission structure an invasives eradication program for the Smith Lot and it was agreed that volunteers working with Turner's colleague could handle the job, with expenses underwritten by the Commission's Town Forest Maintenance Fund. The Commissioners thanked Turner for his presentation before he exited the meeting.

Commission Liaison Activities with other Town Governance Bodies

Buchanan, the Commission's liaison member on the new Town Open Space Committee, reported that the group had held its first meeting on February 6, 2014. Other Committee members present were Thain Allan, Craig McArt and Al Wilson. Charlie McCarthy and Conrad Frey have been appointed as representatives of the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Adjustment respectively and will attend future meetings. Buchanan noted that there exists on the Committee a diversity of approaches to the management of open space and is hopeful this balance will produce a transparent, participatory and fair process. The group will be reviewing comparable initiatives in other towns to help them decide on priorities and methodology. They will be meeting the first Thursday of each month at 8:30 a.m. in the Jerry Whitney Memorial Conference Room at Town Hall. The Commission congratulated Buchanan on progress made to date.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Hocker clarified that it was the policy of the Commission to underwrite expenses for any Commissioner wishing to take advantage of educational and networking opportunities available at various conservation meetings around the state.

Buchanan suggested that the Commission track the progress of two bills currently being developed by the Legislature's Resources, Recreation and Development Committee: Bill 1271

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which would “establish a committee to study the powers and duties of conservation commissions” and Bill 1100 which would “establish a committee to study ownership by public entities of land for conservation purposes.”

Hocker announced that Joe Watts had tendered his resignation from the Conservation Commission, an action which, when accepted by the Select Board, will create an opening on the Commission. He asked that names of potential candidates to fill the spot be submitted to him so that he could forward them to the Selectmen for their consideration.

HANDOUTS

None

ADJOURNMENT

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

The Commission voted unanimously to adjourn at 8:31 p.m.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Grantham Conservation Commission will be held at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, March 24, 2014, in the Jerry Whitney Memorial Conference Room.

Respectfully submitted,

Caroline Hoen

Caroline Hoen, Clerk