

# APPROVED

## Town of Grantham Grantham Conservation Commission

### MEETING MINUTES March 24, 2014

Chairman Richard L. Hocker called the Grantham Conservation Commission to order on Monday, March 24, 2014 at 7:09 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; David Wood (Alternate); and Caroline Hoen, Clerk

**Absent:** Lindsey Lefebvre

#### ADMINISTRATIVE

##### *Approval of Minutes for 17 February, 2014 Meeting*

Chair Hocker asked if there were any additions, corrections, or modifications to the draft minutes for the February 17, 2014 meeting. Buchanan requested the following changes: page 1, 4th line from the bottom, add a comma after the word “could” and another comma after the word “fact”; also on page 2, last bulleted item, 2nd line, add a comma after the word “pit”. 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 February 17, 2013 Minutes as amended; second by Buchanan. There being no further discussion, the motion was put to a vote.*

*Unanimously Approved & Accepted*

#### NEW BUSINESS

##### Conservation Land Purchase

Hocker noted that Grantham’s Land Preservation Capital Reserve Fund, a Commission administrative responsibility, is currently valued at approximately \$80,000.00. The Fund is held in reserve for the acquisition of properties (as the opportunity may arise) important to the preservation of the Town’s rural character. Hocker raised for discussion the possible purchase of a 6.5 acre property that abuts the northern border of the Town-owned Brookside Park area along the west side of Route 10 (see the shaded area on the attached map below). This is wooded acreage with Skinner Brook running through it. Its purchase would increase the 13+ acre Park holding to a total of over 20 acres. A price of \$12,000.00 has been agreed to by the owners. It was Hocker’s understanding that in terms of state environmental mitigation requirements, ownership of these 20+ acres would allow the Town to impact about two (2) acres of wetland elsewhere for construction purposes, should the need arise. He cited a possible future expansion

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of the Grantham Village School as an example. Brown expressed reservations about buying up land for the purpose of enabling, through mitigation, the future destruction of Town wetlands. Hocker offered that, alternatively, a conservation easement could be sought to protect this property from being used in that way. Despite the fact that this land is not suitable for development, and therefore possibly not attractive to other buyers, Howard pointed out that its purchase would augment and protect the Brookside Park area and that it offered potential as a public recreation area.

*A motion was made by Howard to appropriate \$12,000.00 from the Land Preservation Capital Reserve Fund for the purchase of Lot 221-001 consisting of 6.5 acres of land adjacent to the northern border of Brookside Park and west of Route 10 South; second by Wood. There being no further discussion, the motion was put to a vote.*

***Unanimously approved & accepted***

Hocker noted that the next step would be for the Town Administrator and Town legal counsel to conclude negotiations with the owners and prepare the appropriate documentation for final action by the Select Board.

The Commission then reviewed the suitability, for Town conservation purposes, of various other available properties, including a 24-acre holding on Leavitt Hill Road. There was, however, general agreement with Wood's recommendation that serious consideration of any additional land purchases be tabled.

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

### **Approval of Payment to Meadowsend Timberlands Ltd.**

Hocker requested a motion to release funds from the Town Forest Management account to pay a \$1,026.00 invoice from Meadowsend Timberlands Ltd. This charge is for work done by Jeremy Turner to prepare for forest maintenance activities in the Smith Lot. It is anticipated that these activities will be undertaken at such time as the weight limit restrictions on the Miller Pond Road bridge are raised to allow for the passage of logging trucks necessary for the project.

*A motion was made by Buchanan to withdraw the sum of \$1,026.00 from the Town Forest Management Fund to pay an invoice in that amount from Meadowsend Timberlands Ltd. for work done in preparation for forest management activities in the Smith Lot; second by Howard. There being no further discussion, the motion was put to a vote.*

***Unanimously approved & accepted***

### **Commission Liaison Activities with other Town Governance Bodies**

Brown, a member of the Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA), stated that this group had not met since he last reported out to the Commission.

Buchanan, a member of the Open Space Committee, noted that Charlie McCarthy and Conrad Frey, representing the Planning Board and the ZBA respectively, had attended the Committee's last meeting. Discussion centered on open space plans developed by other towns in the region

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and on the Commission's earlier description of an Open Space Initiative. Consideration was given to conducting a public survey to assess the Town's interest in, and understanding of, an open space policy. The Committee's next meeting will be on April 3, 2014 at 8:30 a.m.

### **Frog Pond Mitigation Initiative**

Hocker reported that he and Wood had met with Eastman's General Manager Ken Ryder who assured them that Eastman staff would clean up materials dumped in the Frog Pond area and henceforward take care to honor its protected status. Hocker expressed the hope that Eastman would take steps to eradicate the invasive *Phragmites* that have taken hold as a result of prior abuse of the area.

### **Conservation Commission Openings**

Hocker reported that, at their last meeting, the Selectmen had directed that the Commission be responsible for electing its own Chair. Referring to his intention to step down from the position and assume regular member status until his term's end in April 2015, Hocker opened the need to name a new Chair for discussion. A brief consideration of the matter ensued.

*A motion was made by Buchanan that Sheridan Brown take over the duties of Chair of the Grantham Conservation Commission, effective immediately; second by Wood. There being no further discussion, the motion was put to a vote.*

*Unanimously approved & accepted*

Hocker noted that there remained one other opening on the Commission that needed to be filled. Three possible candidates were named and it was agreed that they should be approached. Brown also suggested that this vacancy be announced in Town publications.

## **HANDOUTS**

Partial map of Grantham showing the area of a potential conservation land purchase (see below).

## **ADJOURNMENT**

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

*The Commission voted unanimously to adjourn at 9:00 p.m.*

## **NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Grantham Conservation Commission will be held at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, April 21, 2014, in the Jerry Whitney Memorial Conference Room.

Respectfully submitted,

*Caroline Hoen*

Caroline Hoen, Clerk