

DRAFT

**Town of Grantham
Grantham Conservation Commission**

**MEETING MINUTES
JUNE 16, 2014**

Chairman Sheridan Brown called the Grantham Conservation Commission to order on Monday, June 16, 2014 at 7:04 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; Dick Hocker; Connie Howard; David Wood (Alternate); and Caroline Hoen, Clerk

Absent: Susan Buchanan; Lindsey Lefebvre

Town of Grantham Staff: Jamielynn Garland

ADMINISTRATIVE

Approval of Minutes for 19 May, 2014 Meeting

Chair Brown asked if there were any additions, corrections, or modifications to the draft minutes for the May 19, 2014 meeting. Wood requested the following changes: on Page 2, last line, delete the word “since” and insert the word “if”; and on Page 3, first line, delete the words “application should be approved” and insert the words “Commission should raise no objection”; and on Page 4 under “Other Board Activities” on the second line of the third bulleted item, delete the words “IPAN IPAN” and insert the words “IPANE (Invasive Plant Atlas of New England)”. Brown 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 May 19, 2014 Minutes as amended; second by Hocker. There being no further discussion, the motion was put to a vote.

Unanimously Approved & Accepted

NEW BUSINESS

Recent Cutting Application & Process for Forest Management Plan Review

Brown expressed concern that the point system used for Commission review of shoreline cutting applications might have been compromised in the recent confusion surrounding an Eastman owner’s four separate submissions. Wood explained that though the process used in this case was highly inefficient, the applications concerned two sets of trees, only one of which involved the 50 foot shoreline conservation buffer. That particular application was therefore processed in the normal way. Brown asked if improvements to the Commission’s review system might be made to avoid the administrative confusion that developed in this case but Wood believed that a recurrence was unlikely.

Perambulation Dates

Wood estimated that this summer's perambulation of the Plainfield/Grantham boundary, including a section of Corbin's Park (Blue Mountain Forest Association), would take about four (4) days. Possible volunteers, including Selectman Warren Kimball, were identified to help with the task. Dates have not yet been set.

Conservation Commission Outreach

Scheduling Blackberry Hike with Grantham Recreation Department

Jamielynn Garland, Activity Director for the Town of Grantham, was recognized to describe a Commission-sponsored berry picking event that she was organizing for late July/early August. She described the outing as an opportunity for Commission members to engage with the public and to help raise awareness of Town conservation issues. Hocker recommended the Reney Forest as a possible site and Howard offered to make a section of her own property available. Garland also offered a possible fall hike to Butternut Pond and a winter snowshoe event as future Commission outreach opportunities. She said all these events would be scheduled on a weekend and posted on the Town website and at Town Hall about two weeks in advance.

Walk Through Brookside Park

It was agreed that a public outing to explore Brookside Park would be postponed until the Town's proposed purchase of an adjacent land parcel could be finalized. Howard suggested that Commission members organize a walk-through for their own edification and a date was set for Thursday, August 7th at 8:30 AM. The picnic area on Route 10 was designated as the meeting place. Brown volunteered to inform Buchanan and Lefebvre of the plan.

Miller Pond Dam Work Day

The Commissioners agreed with Hocker's recommendation that cleanup activities at the Miller Pond dam be postponed.

Update on Town Forest Tree Farm Certification Audit

Hocker reported that he, Renee Gustafson, forester Jeremy Turner and three representatives of the Sullivan County Department of Natural Resources had met with two assessors from the American Tree Farm System (ATFS). The Grantham Town Forest is included in this network and had been chosen at random for review. Turner, who is the Town's point person for ATFS, led an hour and a half walking tour of various areas of the Forest. This inspection resulted in a positive evaluation from the ATFS visitors and also gave the Grantham participants an opportunity to meet the Sullivan County officials. The outing provided ATFS with information for use in a general report they will be issuing on New Hampshire's tree farms.

OTHER BUSINESS

Update on Open Space and Bond Issue Initiatives

Wood reported that he had attended the last meeting of the Open Space Committee to present the concept of a Town bond issue mechanism to raise funds for the purchase of important conservation lands. The Committee was receptive. Committee member and Zoning Board of Adjustment Chair Conrad Frey noted that the current Town Master Plan recommends the consideration of the purchase of open space and he suggested that the Plan revision, due in 2015,

DRAFT

address the recommendation more emphatically and specifically. Charlie McCarthy expressed concerns about the timing of a bond issue. Wood also stated that he had met individually with all three Selectmen specifically to discuss the bond concept. Connie Jones and Ken Story were comfortable with the idea and with a \$2.5 million dollar target while Warren Kimball, though positively disposed, had not yet received full information.

In response to a question from Brown as to whether the Open Space Committee would have a report or recommendations ready before the March 2015 Town Meeting, Wood said such a timeline was unlikely. He added that the preparation of the Master Plan revision by that date, a responsibility of the Planning Board, was also in question. Further, he was of the opinion that a land conservation bond should not be scheduled until the Open Space Committee report and the Master Plan revision were complete. Brown added that having more time to build public support for both the bond concept and the Commission's agenda would be advantageous in any case.

Wood stated that both the Selectmen and the Open Space Committee members had expressed strong interest in meeting with Jim Raynes of Rye, NH, who was involved in structuring both of that town's successful bond issues, and with Nicholas Coates, Executive Director of the New Hampshire Association of Conservation Commissions, who is a well informed advocate of the strategy. They are prepared to speak to the experience of other towns including methods for enlisting public support. Raynes is able to attend the Select Board meeting on August 27th at 5:00 PM and Coates has been invited. The Selectmen would like to have members of the Open Space Committee, the Planning Board and the Conservation Commission attend this meeting as well to discuss the applicability of the bond strategy to Grantham. If it is decided that the concept has merit, the Selectmen may hold an open forum during the winter of 2015 to introduce it to the public.

Brown noted that representatives of the Ausbon Sargent Land Preservation Trust and the University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension are also available to present on the significant savings that can accrue to towns in terms of lower service costs required for undeveloped versus developed lands. These savings represent an important consideration above and beyond the conservation value of open space preservation. Wood noted that the Selectmen seemed to be more aware of this factor than members of the Open Space Committee. The idea of including this second presentation on the August 27th agenda was discussed but it was agreed that this important and compelling topic would be ideal for a future public forum.

Update on Flewelling Lot Forestry Proposal

Hocker reported having attended a recent Select Board meeting at which the question of the use of the Miller Pond Road bridge for timbering activities on the Flewelling easement property was still under discussion. More recently, Town Administrator Melissa White had told him that Peter Blakeman, an engineer who has done several jobs for the Town, would be analyzing the structure further to see if reinforcements would be sufficient to allow for the increase in the bridge's weight limit required for the Flewelling project.

DRAFT

Discussion of Other Ongoing Forestry Projects

Hocker also reported that considerable timbering activity was underway on the Ruger property up Dunbar Hill Road. According to forester Turner, this activity is permissible only if approved forestry practices are being used and if Department of Environmental Services approval has been secured where required.

Conservation Commission Vacancy (Alternate)

Brown indicated that two candidates for the Commission's Alternate vacancy were being considered with a third possible.

HANDOUTS

None

ADJOURNMENT

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

The Commission voted unanimously to adjourn at 8:38 p.m.

NEXT MEETING

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

Respectfully submitted,

Caroline Hoen