

# APPROVED

## Town of Grantham Grantham Conservation Commission

### MEETING MINUTES SEPTEMBER 23, 2013

Chairman Richard L. Hocker called the Grantham Conservation Commission to order on Monday, September 23, 2013 at 7:09 p.m. The meeting was held in the Jerry Whitney Memorial Room at Grantham Town Hall located at 300 Route 10 South in Grantham, NH.

**Present:** Chairman Richard (Dick) Hocker; Susan Buchanan; Connie Howard; Lindsey Lefebvre; Joseph Watts (Alternate); and David Wood (Alternate)

**Absent:** Sheridan Brown

**Members of the Public:** Selectman Ken Story; and Jeremy Turner

### ADMINISTRATIVE

#### *Approval of Minutes for 19 August, 2013 Meeting*

Chair Hocker asked the Commission members if there were any additions, corrections, or modifications to the draft minutes for the August 19, 2013 meeting. Wood had previously requested the following corrections: page 2, third paragraph, under the *Invasive Species Inventory and Eradication* heading, line 4, delete the words “eliminating stands of *Autumn Olive*” and insert “controlling a stand of *Autumn Olive* and one of the stands of *Glossy Buckthorn*”.

*With no further corrections suggested, a motion was made by Wood to approve and accept the August 19, 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

##### *Smith Lot Plan*

Chair Hocker recognized forester Jeremy Turner to elaborate on the Forestry Services Agreement he had previously submitted to the Commission on behalf of The Ecosystem Management Company. The Agreement concerns forest management activities in the Smith Lot

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section of the Town Forest.

Turner referenced his appearance before the Commission at its May 20, 2013 meeting and indicated that the Agreement was based on a forestry plan he had drawn up some years previously to restore the Smith Lot to full health and utility. He observed that although this area, at thirty-eight (38) acres, is relatively small, it has significant wildlife habitat and recreation potential. He emphasized that there would be no out-of-pocket costs to the Town for this project since the resulting wood products would underwrite costs. He then listed the activities that were planned. First, the construction of an infrastructural “landing” for trucks and equipment which could eventually serve as a parking area for public access to the forest. (Consideration of stone and wood finish work could be deferred until the spring of 2014.) Second, a fairly heavy cut of two stands of white pine. One stand comprises about eight (8) acres around the Fisher Cemetery running down to the access road. The cutting here would be done to re-establish an early successional area and to favor the fruit-bearing apple trees that remain from an old orchard. Some new apple trees could also be planted to enhance support of the deer population. The other stand of white pine would receive a more standard treatment involving group and single-tree selection intended to thin some trees and release others depending on vigor and quality. Turner also noted that there is a high density of cherry trees in the Lot that would be conserved, the fruit being a favorite food source for bears.

In order to implement this plan, Turner said he would take care to find a work crew whose skills were suited to all the objectives of the project in terms of scale, site work construction and forestry expertise. He emphasized that awarding the contract as a comprehensive whole to a single operator would be the best way to achieve economies of scale and keep costs down. With regard to timeline, Turner said that once the original Agreement had been signed, he would provide a more detailed document before the Commission’s October meeting, along with sketches and a site plan showing where various management activities would occur. These materials would be part of the “pre-harvest” activities that would meet the Commission’s need for a detailed outline of the work to be done. He expressed understanding that the Commissioners wished to be kept informed and educated about the project as it goes along and to be included in management decisions. He drew their attention to a state publication, *Good Forestry in the Granite State*, which is available online and provides background information for projects such as this one where a balance between interference and respect for the forest’s natural processes must be struck along with consideration of wildlife, aesthetics, forest health and timber harvesting. Turner also recommended the magazine *Northern Woodlands* as a second educational resource. In answer to a question from Lefebvre, Turner said that work would probably start in mid-winter of 2014 when wildlife activity is at a minimum and wet ground is frozen. He mentioned that the crew would be clearing and chipping the debris or “slash” left from the harvesting, leaving the Lot clear. In answer to a question from Wood about the benefit of returning the chipped wood to the forest floor, he replied that this could be a beneficial option depending on conditions at the time. Turner received the thanks of the Commissioners before exiting the meeting.

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## **Open Space Initiative**

Hocker reported that he had spoken with Selectman Connie Jones and that she and Town Administrator Melissa White were beginning the work of appointing the Open Space Committee.

## **Planning for Conservation**

### ***Wetlands Overlay District***

Hocker stated that he had made no further progress on the formulation of the Wetlands Overlay District but would be focusing on this task in the coming weeks.

## **New Initiatives**

### ***Invasive Species Inventory and Eradication: New Developments***

Wood reported on two interesting developments. The first was the serious concern expressed by an Eastman couple about the use of the herbicide glyphosate for the eradication of invasive plants and their recommendation of several alternative methods. This couple has approached the Eastman Board about instituting a new by-law restricting the use of herbicides in Eastman, an action Wood thinks is unlikely. He expressed satisfaction that this protest has generated increased public interest in the problem of invasive species and has created an opportunity for education -- a major goal of the initiative.

The second development is Wood's discovery of a speed bump in the plan to expand the initiative beyond Eastman into the rest of Grantham. He explained that he had consulted with State authorities and discovered that he could only hold an eradication license for Eastman or for Grantham but not both. A viable solution would be to hire a professional to manage the project outside of Eastman but that would entail significant cost, so Wood is investigating ways to solve this problem through volunteer participation. In response to a question from Buchanan, he confirmed that individual landowners are permitted to eradicate invasives on their own land but he pointed out that most of the Town's invasives are along public right-of-ways. After some discussion, it was suggested that a second individual could apply for a license especially since the second phase would probably not get started for at least two years in any case. Howard observed that by continuing the program within the "test area" of Eastman, good information and experience was being developed which would help to sell the initiative to the wider Town. Wood observed that there was really no rush to implement the program outside Eastman because invasives are not currently harming the environment in any significant way. Watts suggested that a preliminary step for expanding the program would be to facilitate education outside of Eastman and to appeal to private landowners to eradicate the invasives that exist on their properties. Wood added that the Commission could facilitate this approach by providing information, equipment and even volunteers to assist private citizens, but that responsibility for the work would have to be assumed by the property owners. Selectman Story underscored the importance of the initiative and the value of using the Eastman experience to educate and enlist the rest of the citizenry, including those in Town governance positions. He recommended that an education session be held at some point at Town Hall to raise awareness and to inform people about the program underway in Eastman. Buchanan inquired if the Town had any Earth Day (April 22<sup>nd</sup>) programs in place and, since there are none, it was agreed that some sort of observance of that day, perhaps featuring an invasives forum, should be considered. Buchanan suggested that the Grantham Village School, which has not heretofore mounted any Earth Day events, be included in the effort. These ideas were enthusiastically received and there was

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consensus that a Grantham Earth Day project merited development, with Story underscoring its community development potential.

### **Flewelling Easement “Walkabout”**

Hocker referenced the Commission’s obligation to inspect the Flewelling Easement property (Sherwood Forest) once a year to check on its condition and to verify the integrity of its boundaries. This mandate is a challenge given the size of the property. He presented Wood’s recommendation that the Commission consider the rehabilitation of an old beach on the Miller Pond shoreline to create a public swimming area. He suggested that the focus of this year’s walkabout be the education of the Commissioners and invited Selectmen as to the condition of the beach, the old campground and dam areas and their potential for development. A plan might be devised to work with the current or future owner (the property being up for sale) for the benefit of Town residents. In order to have as much participation as possible, two outings were scheduled, the first on Wednesday, October 23d at 2:00 p.m. and the second on Sunday, October 27 at 9:30 a.m.

Wood mentioned that the Pond is currently home to a population of leeches but described methods that could be used to eliminate them. Since the water itself is owned by the State, Watts observed that it could be difficult to get the necessary permits. Liability issues were discussed and there was agreement that much more research on this possible initiative was needed.

In response to a question from Watts, Hocker stated that the Commission was now responsible for reporting any breaches of the easement’s regulations. Watts suggested that as an enhancement to the current walkabout method of oversight, it would be possible for two people on all terrain vehicles to complete a comprehensive inspection of the entire property in a day or so without leaving a track. Hocker added that the restoration of signage identifying the property as a conservation easement would be useful and would also help ensure that potential buyers were educated as to the existence of the easement. Watts suggested, with Story concurring, that in fairness to the owners a second sign should be erected to indicate that vehicles are not permitted beyond the bridge off Miller Pond Road and that bridge access is open to pedestrians and snowmobiles only. Note was taken that the rules governing public access to the property had been unclear and contentious for several years.

## **HANDOUTS**

Announcement of the New Hampshire Association of Conservation Commissions 43<sup>rd</sup> Annual Meeting on November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2013 (<http://www.nhacc.org/annualmeeting43/>)

## **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 8:10 p.m.*

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### **NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Grantham Conservation Commission will be held at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, October 21, 2013, in the Jerry Whitney Memorial Conference Room.

Respectfully submitted,

*Caroline Hoen*

Caroline Hoen, Clerk