



Town of Weare Conservation Commission

P.O. Box 190
Weare, NH 03281
Fax: (603) 529-4554
Email: conservation@weare.nh.gov
Website: www.weare.nh.gov

Conservation Commission

Andy Fulton, Chairman
Patricia Myers, Secretary
Stephen Najjar
George Malette
Michael Dahlberg

CONSERVATION COMMISSION MINUTES

January 13, 2010

****DRAFT COPY****

PRESENT: Andy Fulton, Chairman; Patricia Myers, Secretary; Mike Dahlberg; George Malette, Steve Najjar

GUESTS: Barbara Beers - JSRHS teacher, Stephen Pope – Weare land owner, Eric Masterson - PLC, Ian McSweeney - Russell Foundation & Open Space Committee member, Derek Serach - SNHPC.

I. **CALL TO ORDER:**

Chairman Andy Fulton called the meeting to order at 7:10 PM.

II. **Guests:**

Barbara Beers – Student Projects in Eastman Conservation Area – Ms Beers, a biology teacher at John Stark High School, updated the Commission on her efforts to develop hands-on science programs in the Eastman Conservation Area. She had presented the ideas at several previous WCC meetings. The Commission had been very interested and gave approval for her to continue her efforts.

Barbara stated that she has designed a wildlife survey, based on the protocol developed by Vermont wildlife biologist Susan Morse, founder of *Keeping Track*. She distributed maps of the property based on the USGS topographic map with current property boundaries overlaid. Barbara explained she had flagged three potential transects, **300 ? meter** each, through the northwestern of the property closest to the school. The transect locations were indicated on the maps. Students would gather data on the utilization of the study area by 2 species in particular, the Bobcat, and the Snowshoe Hare. Students would walk these transects twice during the study period looking for tracks, scat, and other signs of wildlife activity. They would then analyze the data for Species Presence/ Absence, Species Distribution, and Relative Frequency. Ms Beers asked the Commission for comments and suggestions.

Andy commented that he had seen bobcat sign on the eastern portion of the property. He suggested getting these locations into the GIS. Ms. Beers asked whether her GPS data could be added to our GIS. Andy thought this would be possible. Steve asked Barbara whether she had considered running one of the transects closer to the Black Gum swamp. Ms. Beers was open to the suggestion. Further discussion revealed that the lower transect probably comes quite close to the swamp. Ms. Beers stated that it would take two years before she would be able to determine if the survey was working.

Ms Beers asked if the students could do a formal presentation to the Commission during a televised meeting. Commission members liked the idea. Andy thought the April meeting might be possible. Barbara asked what plans there were for timber harvest on the Eastman Conservation property. Steve responded that there is little mature timber and no logging is planned. He mentioned plans to have Public Works use their brontosaurus to open the field area near route 77. He said the only other

possibility would involve an area of aspen growth that could be specifically managed if some funding became available for wildlife management.

Barbara mentioned she is also working on a bird survey and vernal pool studies for the future. She is developing protocols. She is thinking these might involve the public as well as students.

Erik Masterson, PLC Executive Director - Briefly discussed the report of vehicular activity on the Eastman Conservation Area. The PLCs volunteer monitor for the easement had reported seeing indications that trucks had entered the woods road off of route 77 going as far as the log landing about 200yds into the southern tip of the property. There was no rutting or damage. Eric suggested a gate and signage might be in order. Discussion revealed an interest in allowing this limited road usage to continue. Eric asked about formalizing the landing as a 2nd parking area since this was allowed for in the easement. Steve suggested it would be better to leave it alone unless a real problem use arises. Eric asked the Commission to give the matter more thought. Steve then mentioned he was troubled by very destructive ATV usage occurring on Rattlesnake Hill. Eric acknowledged this was a serious problem with very poor remedy.

Derek Serach, Southern NH Planning Commission – Derek updated the Commission on the Piscataquog River Conservation Plan that is underway at the SNHPC. He specifically needed our input on the co-occurrence model. He provided materials and asked that the Commission members each score the elements in the model and email our results to him. There were some questions and discussion about the scoring.

Derek had given members 11 x 17" copies of the maps that will be part of the co-occurrence model. Andy pointed out that many of Weare's conservation lands were not shown on the maps. Steve pointed out that fragmentation by roads as shown on the map was important but that fragmentation of land ownership has an adverse impact on conservation value as well.

Ian McSweeney, Executive Director, Russell Foundation – stepped forward long enough to deliver a check from the Russell Foundation to go toward the Brown Farm conservation costs. This money will go back into the Conservation Fund.

The Melvin Farm project – Eric Masterson spoke first saying that he had just that day received the appraisal, which came in at \$200,500. He would now be able to firm up the project budget numbers so we would know exactly what the remaining costs are.

Stephen Pope reviewed the project history and the next steps to be taken. He said there would be deed restrictions on the 2 large back lots that would only allow one single family residence on each, would prohibit any further subdivision, and would prohibit granting of rights of way, or roads to cross. Stephen stated that the application for the NRCS Wetlands Reserve funding was submitted. In this case the NRCS would hold the easement and cover the costs. The 4 lot subdivision they envision would be on 13 acres of the property in the vicinity of other existing houses. The open space area would be contiguous with the wetlands easement area. Stephen said they will be going before the Board of Selectmen as soon as possible to request the Mildred Hall funding be approved. This funding had to be secured by the Purchase and Sale Agreement deadline of February 27, 2010. All of this must be in place by March 31, 2010 or the FRPP money would be lost.

Steve asked Eric if the town would still hold executory interest in the easement if Conservation Fund money was not approved for the project. Eric replied that it would be fine with PLC and might even be required if the BOS must show the town's "real interest".

In order to move the discussion forward, Pat reminded the Commission that two requests had been made of the WCC by the Popes and PLC; 1) to come out in support of the project to the BOS, and 2) to provide funding for stewardship and transaction costs of the project up to \$20,000. She suggested separating the decision about funding from the decision on supporting the project when the Popes and PLC go before the BOS for approval of the Mildred Hall Trust funding. Steve said he wanted to see the appraisal document in order to make an informed decision. Eric agreed to make it available to the Commission. George suggested that in order to assess the level of consensus among members the Commission could take a non-binding show of hands on these questions. Pat recused herself since she is an abutter. Mike reminded the Commission of the limited Conservation Fund balance but stated he was OK with the WCC expressing support for the project.

Mike then offered a motion that the Conservation Commission make no statement as to funding until further review, but to support the project at the BOS meeting on the Mildred Hall funding. George seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. Andy called for those in favor: George, Mike, Andy. Opposed: none, Abstain: Steve.

The Open Space Committee will take up the discussion of funding at its January 26th meeting and bring a recommendation to the next WCC meeting on February 10th.

- III. Minutes of December 14, 2009** – In section II, the 1st paragraph the time 7:?? pm should be changed to read 7:17 pm. In the following paragraph the time 8:?? pm should be changed to read 8:04 pm. Also in Section II, in the second sentence under Pope – Melvin Farm, the Lot # should be 7. In Section IV, the first bullet, the file # should be (Pat will look on line). In Section V, the Conservation Fund update should read: *The Nov 2009 Conservation Fund / Unrestricted Grant Fund report was reviewed. The Conservation Fund balance is \$ 90,009.59. The Unrestricted Grant Fund balance is \$647.50. This is a Certificate of Deposit from which 1 withdrawal every six months is allowed without penalty.* Also in Section V, in Wood Family Forest, in the second sentence, replace the words: *broken by vandals* with the words *pulled apart by an unknown person(s)*. Finally, the header is not correct on date or page number.

George made the motion to accept the December 14, 2009 minutes as amended. Mike seconded, and all voted in favor.

IV. Planning Board Issues –

Lanier subdivision, Concord Stage Road – NH Fish & Game reviewed the plans and has requested a larger culvert so that Blandings Turtles would be able to move through them freely. Steve pointed out that the larger size won't help unless the culverts are to be partially sunk to allow a buildup of sediment forming a more natural surface inside the culvert. Mike found that the plan did indicate the culverts are to be buried to 1.5 feet. Steve doubted even this would be used by turtles unless flooded.

V. Other:

- **The Annual Report** - must be in to Merry Rice (BOS Office) no later than 1-25-2010 or it will not appear in the 2009 Town Annual Report.
- **The Planning Board has invited Attorney Bill Drescher** to attend their February 11, 2010 meeting for a question/answer session on cluster subdivision open space protection options. At the January 10th meeting there will be a discussion to develop questions for the Feb 11 meeting. Conservation Commission members are invited to participate.

- **Timber Harvest update** – Steve reported that forester Jeremy Turner turned in a check for \$15,220 as revenue for November from the Felch Farm harvest. Steve thought there might be another check in December as well. These checks will be deposited to the Town Forest account.
 - **NRI photos** – Andy reported that John Ciampi sent in several photos for use in the NRI.
 - **Draft NRI Report** – Andy stated that a hardcopy of the draft report had come in just that afternoon. He asked that someone take it to review then pass it on to another CC member. Also the report will be up on the K&I website on Thursday January 14th. Please get comments back to Andy so he can pass them on to Chris and Pete before the February Commission meeting. Steve asked for the remaining NRI costs so this can be available for the funding discussion at the January 26th WOSC meeting.
 - Steve reported meeting with Weare resident **Chris Conroy**. Chris was interested in learning more about the CC as part of a class he is taking.
 - Andy reported the **laptop has been serviced** and software updated. He said the town network password has been changed. He also reported the ESRI fee is due and that the GIS support system is good through May 2010.
 - Mike reported he had done the **Collins Ledge monitoring** and prepared and mailed in the completed report form.
 - Steve said he completed the **Alex property (Ferrin Pond) monitoring** and sent in the report to LCIP.
 - **Paul Doscher** has requested help from the Commission in cleaning up a **tire dump** that's developing on the Poor Farm Town Forest. Several members expressed interest in participating.
 - Referring to the email from Paula Bellamore at PLC in which she said PLC is interested in **completing the CE on the Oliphant property** (now part of the Chevy hill Town Forest), Pat said she thought the CE had been done. At least that it was part of the agreement with the Tiffanys that secured private contribution of the \$10,000 for the stewardship.
- ◆ **ADJOURNMENT:** There being no further business before the commission Steve made the motion to adjourn. George seconded. All voted in favor. Andy adjourned the meeting at 10:21 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Pat Myers, Weare Conservation Commission Secretary

Cc: Town Clerk's Office,
BOS Office – Merry Rice
WCC Office files