



TOWN OF
NEW LONDON, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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NEW LONDON CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, November 18, 2020 via zoom

8:30 AM

Due to the COVID-19/Coronavirus crisis and in accordance with Governor Sununu's Emergency Order #12 pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04, this Board is authorized to meet electronically. The public has access to contemporaneously listen and participate in this meeting through the video conferencing platform Zoom.us.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Bob Brown (chair), Michael Gelcius, Ruth White, Mark Vernon, Joe Kubit, Andy Deegan (in late, 9:54am), Michael Kennedy

MEMBERS ABSENT: Stanley Morono (Resigned), Dode Gladders

OTHERS PRESENT: Rick Davies, Karen Hoglund

1. **Call to order** – Chair Brown called the meeting to order at 8:53am.

2. **Public comment** – None

3. **Permit applications updates**

Michael Gelcius reported on the following projects:

- Goosehole Road – permitting was approved.
- Lakeshore Drive - driveway work permitting has come in also.
- 163 Morgan Hill Road - wetland permit for maintenance work on a manmade pond.

4. **Review, accept and approve the October 21, 2020 draft meeting minutes**

Chair Brown noted that roll call votes need to match members in attendance. There were two members that left early.

He also read part of email from NH fish and Game who commended them on the fine job done and this should have been captured in the minutes.

IT WAS MOVED (Michael Gelcius) AND SECONDED (Michael Kennedy) to approve the minutes of the October 21, 2020 meeting with the suggested amendments. Chair Brown: Yes, Michael Gelcius: Yes, Michael Kennedy: Yes, Mark Vernon: Yes, Ruth White: Yes. Joe Kubit: Yes. THE MINUTES WERE APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY

5. **Trails:**

➤ **P/C Bog –boardwalks**

Chair Brown noted that Mark Vernon and others have been doing work in the bog. All of the material that he had transported there was used. They built 7 new boardwalks and repaired three more but there is more to be done. Ruth White posted a sign to alert people that the boards can be dangerous when they get wet and icy.

Michael Kennedy asked if we ever considered closing the Bog trail for the winter. He is concerned about liability and safety issues. Ruth White stated this trail is used year round and agrees that this time of year it can be treacherous. Chair Brown replied they can discuss this with the Town Administrator to see if we are obligated to keep it open. Mark Vernon responded that he has seen chicken wire and heavy duty staples not driven in all the way as effective methods to make

boardwalks less slippery. Chair Brown noted he has also seen roofing shingles used. This should be discussed further.

➤ **Trail Maintenance Lumber**

Chair Brown noted that the availability of pressure treated lumber is coming back. The price has also gone down a bit but not enough so he will continue to watch that market until it gets down to a reasonable price. If they need more lumber they will get more Hemlock for now.

➤ **Spofford Easement -storm water management –**

Mark Vernon reported that this was a partnership funded by the Greenway and the work was done by the town of New London Public Works Department. Several water bars were dug on the steep section of the Bunker loop. He will be interested to see if it helps with the ice problems this winter as that was the goal.

➤ **New trail volunteers**

Mark Vernon stated they have a larger and more robust roster of volunteers than they have ever had and that is really great. Chair Brown stated not having the Merrimack County department of Corrections volunteers was a big loss of man power this year. He will follow up with them once things settle down with the pandemic. He stated his appreciation for the volunteers as it is a lot of work.

Mr. Vernon also noted that every time he checks the trail library at Clark Lookout the supply of books is low. He suggested having members stock it when they can. Michael Gelcius stated he has books and has been adding them. The problem is he used to get a supply of books at the transfer station and that is no longer available. The books are going out but they aren't being replaced. Ruth White stated she also has books she could add.

6. Pine Hill Ski Club - trail use

Michael Gelcius stated he talked with the Pine Hill Ski Club about the work they are planning to do. He told them they should not do any cutting until they had a chance to review it. He will be meeting with them and will go out and walk the path to see what needs to be done, if anything. There is a large tree that may need to be cut down by a professional. Chair Brown noted that DPW has offered to help with any large trees that present risk. Michael Gelcius will contact Bob Harrington about this.

Chair Brown stated the Conservation Commission's position on skiing on town property is they are very supportive and believe it is a good thing. The Conservation Commission wants to work closely with the Ski Club but over the years, they have not always had a good relationship with them largely due to a lack of communication.

7. Easement monitoring

Chair Brown asked Mark Vernon how many parcels they are responsible to monitor and he responded there are about 11 or 12. He would like to know who the primary holder of the easement is on these properties and make a list of who is responsible to monitor them. He believes they are going to be asked to do more and would like to have an understanding of what they are committing to. When an easement is granted there is usually a stewardship fee involved. Chair Brown stated we should have a better description about what should be done and understand what the commitment is regarding time and effort.

8. Projects:

Conservation Land Acquisition projects

➤ **Messer Farm Project** - Chair Brown reported that the sale had closed on the Messer Farm project last month. He has not heard from anyone about what the Conservation Commission's role was in that project. They agreed to make some money available but he is unsure how much money they raised or how big of a loan was taken out. It is wonderful news that the land is now owned by Ausbon Sargent.

Andy Deegan reported that they closed on the property last month and Ausbon Sargent now owns that property. They are in discussions with Spring Ledge on a working relationship so they can continue to grow crops on the property. There are no other immediate plans for the property.

It is unclear what the Conservation Commission's commitment was to this project and all that was agreed on was a proposed number. They would need a town approval vote but it was decided that Mary Haddad funds could not be used. They will need to hear from Ausbon Sargent to find out what is expected of them but Mr. Deegan does not believe a pledge was made by the Conservation Commission.

➤ **Hamel Parcel** - Bob Harrington and Chair Brown walked this property a few weeks ago. The Conservation Commission's interest in this property is protection of Lyon Brook and the Lyon Brook trail. The land is very wet and it would cost a lot of money to bring in utilities and put a driveway in. DPW has interest in the land for future use and there will be further discussion about the feasibility of that. There are two easements listed for that property that include a right of way and an easement already on it to protect the brook. They are asking \$130,000 for the property.

➤ **Other** - Michael Kennedy sent Chair Brown information on parcel 091-035, Columbus Avenue which is 24 acres. Chair Brown asked if there has been any discussion with Ausbon Sargent or LSPA about this property. Mr. Kennedy responded not that he is aware of. This is within the I89 right of way and looks land locked may have access issues. Mr. Kennedy stated it caught his eye because it was in New London and near Lake Sunapee. It would seem important to the watershed. Chair Brown suggested reaching out to Ausbon Sargent.

➤ **Low Plain - timber harvest** - Last year a plan was in place to finish the Southern section. There were accessibility issues and it was determined it was better to access it from the Andover Road end which is about 3/4 of a mile. Due to the condition of the forest and the wildlife opportunities it would be a worthwhile project. This was marked in 2016 and it wasn't done then and wasn't done last year either. The new 30 acre parcel on Shaker road was also going to get done. The issue for whole tree harvesting right now is there is no market for the biomass. Cut to length might be a better way to go. Chair Brown has spoken with Leo Maslan and it looks like this could be done early this winter depending on the COVID situation. Mr. Maslan asked if they would like to do a public educational tour like they have done in the past. It is a lot of extra work but it was very well attended and everyone seemed positive about it. Michael Gelcius thinks having public buy in is always a positive thing and is in favor of it.

IT WAS MOVED (Michael Gelcius) AND SECONDED (Michael Kennedy) to approve the timber harvest project subject to the final details. Bob Brown: yes, Michael Gelcius: yes, Mark Vernon: yes, Ruth White: yes, Michael Kennedy: yes, Joseph Kubit: yes, Andy Deegan: yes. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

Mark Vernon asked if this should be renamed to be the Esther Currier project as opposed to the Low Plain project. Chair Brown stated they all respect all the work that she did and she was the founder of the Conservation Commission etc. but her name is already mentioned 7 or 8 times in signage. Esther Currier herself used the term Low Plain for this property. Michael Gelcius thinks it is a continuation of work that has already been labeled and may be confusing to change it at this point. Ruth White

stated she would not be against using the Esther Currier name. Chair Brown stated he will consider it and a draft will be sent around for thoughts and comments.

➤ **Trail Patch Program** - Ruth White stated there has been a lot of activity in the past month. She made a list of all recipients since 2012 and there are 51 names. She is unsure if all names have been captured so she would like to send out the list to see if members might recognize anyone that is missing.

9. Invasive Program

Ruth White sent Chair Brown several publications she found regarding invasive species that were all done by the Conservation Commission. She does not think when people request a building permit if they are given any information on invasives and wonders if they should be? Michael Kennedy still plans to coordinate the educational program that was postponed last year. The plan is to reschedule this for next summer. Dode Gladders would also be a good resource.

10. New business

Chair Brown asked who would be available to attend the March 2021 town meeting and most members stated they could attend. Due to the pandemic it may look different this year and they may have warrant articles to present.

Mark Vernon reminded the group about the hiking series. There are scheduled hikes for the months of December, January and February.

11. The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, December 16, 2020

12. Motion to Adjourn

IT WAS MOVED (Ruth White) AND SECONDED (Mark Vernon) to adjourn the meeting. Bob Brown: yes, Michael Gelcius: yes, Mark Vernon: yes, Ruth White: yes, Michael Kennedy: yes, Joseph Kubit: yes, Andy Deegan: yes. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:22AM

Respectfully submitted,

Trina Dawson

Recording Secretary
Town of New London