



TOWN OF NEW LONDON, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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APPROVED Minutes of the December 21, 2011 Conservation Commission Meeting

MEMBERS PRESENT: Bob Brown (Chairman), Rick Anderson, Dan Allen, Emma Crane, Andy Deegan, Terry Dancy, Laura Alexander, Peter Stanley (Zoning Board Administrator), Bob Crane (Webmaster), Clayton Platt, and Candice Whitney (visitor)

MEMBERS ABSENT: Sue Clough and Ruth White

Chair Brown called the meeting to order at 9:01am and explained that Clayton Platt was present to discuss the forestry plan he had been working on for Low Plain. He gave the floor to Mr. Platt.

Mr. Platt passed out plans of the map and the plan he had put together. One feature according to the deed was that any timber harvesting has to be approved by Fish and Game. He went through the map to explain what each color meant, including hardwoods, shrubs and wetlands. Most of his forestry work concentrated on the green area which was white pine covered, red maples, hemlock and other hard woods. A lot of the report deals with potential management of this area. He has included some suggestions on how to proceed with timber harvesting, should they decide to move forward with that. He pointed out hiking and skiing trails on the property as well. With regards to the timber, he had crews measuring plots in the south and north and he estimated about 1.6 (million?) feet of pine which was a lot. It is scattered throughout and the estimated value was between \$150,000 to \$200,000.

Mr. Allen asked for the relative maturity of the stand. Mr. Platt said it varied but that the larger trees are about 100 years old. There are large pine trees that haven't been cut since the early 1900's. Mr. Allen asked if the value of timber excluded the 50' buffer for the wetland. Mr. Platt said it did not. He wondered if there had to be that buffer or if they could decide to waive that. Mr. Stanley said that this would not be subject to the shoreland protection act or the town's shoreland overlay regulations because it is not listed as a protected body of water. It is a mapped stream and wetland and is subject to buffer but timber harvest is permitted with approval from the Planning Board. Even if they were doing a patch-cut near the water to create a habitat with the growth of hard wood, they would be subject to Planning Board approval.

Mr. Stanley said that they would need to take into consideration the abutters of the property, should they go forward with timber harvesting. Mr. Platt agreed. He noted that the majority of the green area on the map could use some form of harvesting in the next two to ten years. He said there are a number of crossings on the land that will be challenging. Whoever does the harvesting will have to take extra care in the areas, some bridges may need to be constructed, and long distances will need to be crossed. He offered some suggestions of entry and exit to the property. He noted that one way to do the harvest would be to come and do it all at once. It would take a couple weeks and the impact would be over and done with for the next 10-15 years.

Mr. Deegan said that these bridges put in for harvesting could be beneficial for people who cross country ski in the winter.

Chair Brown asked if approval from Fish and Game was required to open up a trail. Mr. Stanley said that if they were maintaining a trail, he didn't believe it was necessary, but it would be a good idea to let them know what was going on in the event that they came to walk the trail and saw trees that had been cut.

Mr. Platt thought the Conservation Commission should read through the document and he would be happy to come back in a couple months to answer any questions they may have. Mr. Platt said he would send an electronic copy to Mr. Stanley so it could be sent out to more people to review.

Mr. Stanley said that the revenue from the harvest may be put into the General Fund, per the wishes of the Select Board, unless the Conservation Commission had plans for the money. That may determine when they do the cutting, should they agree to move forward with it. Mr. Platt suggested reaching out to other organizations that cut trees to turn it into an educational project. Ms. Alexander said it would be nice to harvest some timber in a way that could be educational and promote good harvesting methods. Some town revenue may help the town see that the Conservation Commission was helping to bring in revenue.

IT WAS MOVED (Terry Dancy) AND SECONDED (Emma Crane) to pay \$1,280 to Clayton Platt for the forestry plan for Low Plain. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

Mr. Allen thought they should be judicious about what was being cut because this was a public recreation area. He felt they should leave a 50' border around the wetlands. Mr. Stanley said that they manage for the habitat and health of the forest first. Revenue would be a second thought. It was thought that it would not be a problem to get approval from Fish and Game to cut, assuming they follow the forestry plan.

Chair Brown asked Ms. Alexander if there was any chance of getting a student or students together to advertise about this possible timber management. She didn't believe that was a possibility but said she was willing to do whatever she could do.

Mr. Denning asked if there were any resources available to help pay for the cost of the timber harvest. Mr. Stanley said this was a great idea. He said there was roughly \$8,000 worth of machine time needed to get through the old road area. Fish and Game have grants available for these kinds of projects. He added that it is preferred to have patches of land away from human reach to promote them creating and maintaining their habitat. The beavers serve as a management tool in this area. Mr. Dancy said that it wasn't until after the cutting was done in that area that the beavers came in and became active.

Minutes

Chair Brown asked if anyone would make a motion to approve the minutes from November 16, 2011. He said the first page, first paragraph, they talked about Leo Maslin being from Cornish Flat; he is not a New London resident.

IT WAS MOVED (Laura Alexander) AND SECONDED (Emma Crane) to approve the minutes of November 16, 2011, as amended. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

Applications

Ponderosa Trust – Pilot House Road. Requesting a boat lift and canopy next to an existing dock. Mr. Stanley said they typically have never had much to say about docks and such devices. He didn't have an objection to a canopy because it shades the water and provides a spot of cooler water. Chair Brown said it is to cover a 16' foot boat.

There were no concerns from the Conservation Commission and the request was signed.

Peter Messer – Installation of a Culvert

Mr. Stanley said that there are 20+/- acres of property and wishes to put a house there. There are poorly drained soils in this area. After working with a wetlands specialist and septic person, they would need to put a culvert in which would disturb wetlands on each side. He has impacted several wetlands. The culvert should have been put in there initially but never was.

There were no concerns from the Conservation Commission and the request was signed.

Beaver Dams

Mr. Stanley said that the next afternoon he and Chad Denning, Recreation Director, were going to go pull out the beaver dam that was built behind the old middle school. It was assumed that the beavers have been removed although he isn't able to reach him by phone.

Budget

Chair Brown said that they needed to get their budget done by the end of the meeting. Their budget was just decreased by \$1,280. The clean-up at Philips was not to exceed \$2,000. In 2010 their budget was 14800 and they spent about 10,000. Last year he was asked to submit a 12 month budget and then another six month budget to transfer to the new fiscal year. What happened was that it had to be changed to a six month budget followed by a 12-month budget. By June 2011 the six month budget was closed. They spent only 1854 of the 4500 budget. In there it was their intention to pay half of the Fish and Game Stewardship Fee. Those funds were closed and are not accessible. He believed the funds would be available in the 2012 budget. Mr. Stanley said the funds weren't encumbered because there was no contract in place.

Chair Brown passed around a proposed budget for 2013 and welcomed comments and suggestions. The numbers he used are what was requested and what was approved for 2010 through 2012.

Mixed Seed – this was taken out as it wasn't needed.

Dues – remained unchanged. They pay Conservation Commission Association Dues of \$250.00

Invasive Species – Chair Brown thought this should be a separate discussion. Mr. Allen said he suggested \$1,450.00 and would address Knotweed. This would include obtaining a permit, initial treatment and follow-up treatment if necessary. This is for Low Plains, Shepherd Pit and the Stump Dump. Chair Brown said that he would like to talk with Mr. Lee about this to see what his plan is. He wanted to Board of Selectmen to chime in on this and help them determine if this was something the Conservation Commission should be doing. Mr. Stanley said that the statute says that they can make recommendations about the protection of natural resources, but if someone questioned the appropriation for them to do it themselves, it would be a bit of a stretch.

Mr. Anderson felt it was important to speak with Mr. Lee and said that most of the patches of Knotweed were on the side of the roads, which would be a public works responsibility. It was noted that it resides mostly off of State roads, but that the State isn't doing anything about it. They are not even mowing anymore. Mr. Deegan suggested spreading the knowledge about Knotweed to people in town. Mr. Anderson said that people are hungry to know how to deal with it. He volunteered to speak with Mr. Lee and then the Selectmen about this issue. He would report back to the Conservation Commission about what he has found. Mr. Stanley said to keep \$100.00 and they could increase it at some point.

Trails and Supplies – they had \$3,500 in there and it has been higher in the past. Mr. Dancy said that funding for recreational trails from the state has been eliminated. Mr. Stanley and Mr. Allen did not recall that New London had ever made use of these funds in the past.

Water Analysis - \$200.00 should suffice.

Yahoo – \$180.00

Publication and Ads - \$200.00

Printing - \$200.00

Laminating - \$200.00

Easements - \$5,000.00

Forestry Plan - \$1,500.00. He said they have been given the OK to investigate the two town parcels that are about 30 acres each. Mr. Stanley said there is no survey on those parcels. Chair Brown suggested changing the name of the fund to be Forestry Plan/Survey. He thought they should have someone come in and look at the parcels to see what they are dealing with.

Forest Nursery - \$100.00. He said they need to buy some pots and thinks they will have some stock given to them.

Intern - \$ They were in agreement to do this again as they got a lot out of it. They found the right person to do it and they'd like to go ahead to do it again. Mr. Allen said they haven't taken advantage of the offerings of the Boy Scouts. Chair Brown said he has tried to contact scout leaders and has never heard back.

Invasive Species

Mr. Anderson said that the Lake Associations will probably ask for assistance again this year for Milfoil prevention and treatment. He wondered if the Conservation Commission was behind this. Chair Brown said that they were. Mr. Anderson said that usually the Lake Associations ask for assistance separately and wondered if they should approach it differently. Mr. Stanley didn't see any problem with the associations getting together. Mr. Anderson said that the associations coming together would be so that each knows what they would be asking for and to be on the same page. They would request funds separately still.

RSA 36-A

They do have support from the Board of Selectmen, the Planning Board and the Budget Committee. He said they need to focus on educating others and try to overcome objections. Mr. Deegan volunteered to speak at Rotary.

Perambulation

Chair Brown said they planned to go to the Board of Selectmen to see how they would like to proceed. He said he would find out if they had made a decision on this.

Philips Preserve Clean-Up

Funds were encumbered and he fears if they don't use the funds they will lose them. It is still too wet to go in there at this point. Mr. Stanley contacted Gallup who said he would check the soil conditions and if it was firm enough he would try to go in there and do it.

Trails

Chair Brown had an offer through Mark Vernon who has a relative who is an assistant headmaster at a private school. Some students needed to do some community service and so they came and camped out at Mr. Vernon's house and cleared some brush that was cut in June. They spent about six hours on this project and the working conditions and weather were unpleasant. There is one large pile remaining, but the rest has been cleaned up. The next morning, John Clough came out with Chair Brown and cut more brush for a couple hours. The students came back and helped to clear it away. The students and assistant Headmaster were very appreciative and they'd like to come back to help more.

Messer Pond Trail – They have put the trail signs and the Ausbon Sargent squirrel signs up.

Clark Pond Trail System – At the last meeting Mr. Allen suggested extending a ski trail that would cross the pond. They all thought it would be a good idea but expressed some concern about safety and liability. They left it that he would speak with Ms. Hallquist about this. Ms. Hallquist came to the meeting minutes

before this topic came up and was there to comment on it. She said that it wasn't so much a liability issue. When they open lands up for recreation there is no liability issue. They have insurance, but the issue is safety. If they encourage people to go out somewhere and drown, it would be unfortunate. Her concern was whether someone would check the ice each day or maintain it in a safe manner. Mr. Allen said that he knows when the ice is safe and when it is not. They have as much as two or three feet of ice generally and it doesn't melt quickly. In his mind, the beginning and the end of the season is where they would need to be concerned, but not every day. Ms. Hallquist wondered how they would monitor this in the beginning and end of the season for people who are not familiar with this body of water. Mr. Allen said he would be responsible for posting signs to show when the trail is open or closed. Mr. Deegan said that the trail, owned by the Town, ends at the water. The State owns the water.

Ms. Hallquist said people could easily slip and fall on the trail, without even being on the ice. Encouraging people to go on the ice and have no responsibility of checking the safety of the ice was a concern of hers. She would like to act conservatively and not encourage people to go on the ice at all. She didn't feel there was liability, however, as long as they don't charge to use the trail. Mr. Dancy said the minimum they could do is put up a sign that says "Danger – Ice." Chair Brown thought a sign would help. Ms. Hallquist said there is no requirement that the town put a sign up on a trail. The most conservative decision would be to not encourage people to go onto the ice without it being monitored regularly. If the town doesn't have to take on risk, that is the best. But if the risk is worth it and is slim, they feel they want to take it on. She wondered if the Conservation Commission would lay the track across the ice or if Mr. Allen would do it as a private citizen. Ms. Hallquist said that water is different from a trail. They need to be responsible to make sure the water is safe. Mr. Allen said that he stops grooming when the ice on the pond is wet. He said at this point, ice fishermen are still using the pond and the ice is still safe.

Chair Brown said that there is already a sign at the end of the trail before the lake that says "Trail Ends Here".

Mr. Allen said that he dug out some wet organic material in a section at the Clark Pond trails. Mr. Lee brought a load of crushed glass in, and Mr. Allen covered the glass with the organic matter. He also filled a low area in the parking area and covered it up with sand. He also reported that the "Tank Trap" is under control. He calls it a "Tank Trap" because even a tank couldn't get through because of the rocks. They have one section of wet trail about 30 – 40 feet. The first year it was dry but he thinks it possible to re-route the trail about 20' uphill where it is dry. He would need to cut two maples to do so. No one thought that was a problem. The alternative was to build a 40' bridge.

Chair Brown said that a lot of sign work has been completed due to the unseasonably warm weather. W. Michael Todd called and helped remove some trees that had fallen over the Lyon Brook Trail.

Files

Mr. Dancy and Chair Brown would file the past minutes, which were printed out and signed.

Mail

Mr. Stanley referenced an LSR (Legislative Service Request) that was upcoming that had to do with taking away rights of Conservation Commissions. He would call Carol Andrews to see if there was a need for support of Conservation Commissions to oppose this bill, which would require Board of Selectmen approval to do anything.

Upcoming Meetings

Chair Brown said they would meet at 2pm in January, February, March and April of 2012. They tried to reserve this room but it is not available until April at these times. The first three meetings of 2012 would be held in Peter Stanley's office.

Other

Shoreline Protection Act – Mr. Dancy said that three towns got together to meet within four meetings with the Regional Planning Commission. They would meet regarding the watershed of Sunapee to try and get the cooperation of the Selectmen of the towns to write to the State legislatures to reverse or control the gutting of the regulations. A draft letter has been prepared to get each town's agreement to jointly send a letter to the legislatures. Mr. Stanley said that currently there is no shoreline protection act. He is hopeful that the new act will end up more effective in the future in comparison to the current act. The sponsor of the latest bill has admitted that it went a bit too far. It is ultimately up to the towns to be responsible for the water bodies in their own towns.

**IT WAS MOVED (Emma Crane) AND SECONDED (Andy Deegan) to adjourn the meeting.
THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 11:10am.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristy Heath, Recording Secretary
Town of New London