

**TOWN OF NEW LONDON
CONSERVATION COMMISSION
NOVEMBER 19, 2008**

PRESENT: Les Norman (Chair), Terry Dancy, Ruth White, Emma Crane, Bob Crane (Volunteer), Bob Brown, Dan Allen, Dale Conley

Others; Jessie Levine, (Town Administrator), Peter Stanley, (Zoning Administrator), Andrew Deegan, Beth McGuinn (ASLPT)

Les Norman opened the meeting at 1:00P.M. The following topics were discussed.

MINUTES: The minutes of the October 15 meeting were approved as presented.

STANLEY EASEMENT: Beth McGuinn made a presentation to the Commission regarding, “Stanley Farm Association – Additional Deed”. Her purpose in coming to the Commission meeting was to provide an update on the easement as well as to gain support for this additional initiative.

She reviewed the history of the Stanley family granting two conservation easements to the Ausbon Sargent Land Preservation Trust (ASLPT) in 1989, covering approximately 31.5 acres located in 4 lots, 3 on and near Burpee Hill Road, and 1 on Newport Road. She reviewed that the Town of New London holds back-up/executory interests in both of those easements.

She told the Commission that the ASLPT and the Stanley Farm Association (current owner of the easement land) are working toward combining and updating the language in these easements and adding the intervening land (approximately 33 additional acres) for a total of about 64.5 acres. She indicated that

- the new easement would retain the spirit, restrictions and reserved rights of the earlier deeds, except where the reserved rights are no longer necessary.
- on the intervening lands, the Association would reserve the right to build one rustic structure for outdoor recreation no greater than 600 square feet.
- also on the intervening lands, would resolve any existing encroachments by adjacent landowners.
- on the earlier easement, the right to grant septic easements to abutters would be tightened and also allow for a joint septic system to reduce impact.
- On the whole area, the easement language would be modernized.

She told the Commission that ASLPT and the Stanley Farm Association would like to close the easement before the Christmas holidays.

Ms. McGuinn is requesting that the Town of New London continue its current role in this expanded and renewed easement. ASLPT would provide the easement deed for the Town to review, provide baseline documentation to the Town, and continue to monitor and steward the large easement property, provide monitoring reports to the Town. She

requested that the Conservation Commission vote to accept the back-up role on the additional easement. This proposal would then be brought to the New London Selectman for their consideration and approval. Dan Allen so moved. The motion was seconded by Terry Dancy. All Commission members voted in favor of this proposal.

BUDGET COMMITTEE ACTION: Ms. Levine reported that the Budget Committee, at their November 18, 2008, meeting discussed the CIP, and shared the decisions regarding the Conservation Commission's item in the CIP budget. This item has all been reduced from \$50,000 to zero in the 2009 budget. She noted that there was no representative from the Conservation Commission at this meeting. Chair Norman stated that he thought there were two issues regarding this decision: 1) the philosophical issue of what is the purpose of the CIP, and, 2) the particular concerns of the Conservation Commission.

Ms. Levine reported that it was her view that the Budget Committee cut the CIP as a one-time action in order to minimize the damage brought about by the current economy. She also stated that she thought the Budget Committee was open to the fact that this step may need to be revisited in the following year. Basically the Budget Committee cut about \$280,000 out of proposed deposits of \$700,000 into the CIP fund. She said that the Budget Committee went line by line seeking short term relief for long term gain for the taxpayers. All of the requests for funds which were cut to zero were not for immediate use. Ms. Levine indicated that the philosophical issue of purpose of the CIP did not come up for discussion.

Mr. Dancy said that while he understood the concerns of the immediate budget situation by the Budget Committee, he also was concerned about the possibility of a precedent being set by the Budget Committee regarding CIP funds. He said the CIP is a process that has been worked on for the past 20 years and to revert back now would be a real mistake. He wondered if there were anyway to get an assurance that the current economic situation was the sole reason for doing this now.

Chair Norman asked Ms. Levine if there had been a decrease in the New London tax base. She responded that there had not been. She said that homes in New London are currently assessed at 95% of market value and that the sale prices of homes are higher than assessed value. She said that in this past year the decreases of Town revenues were related to the settlement of the abatement issue with the Colby-Sawyer College, and several properties that became tax-exempt during the year.

After further discussion it was suggested to Ms. Levine that the 2009 Town Warrant include those CIP items from the Conservation Commission, line by line, which were cut in order for the residents of the Town to see exactly what was being eliminated in this CIP budget. It was further decided that representatives from the Conservation Commission attend the next Budget Committee meeting on December 4 at 7:00P.M. at the NL fire station. At this time they may have the opportunity to represent the interest of the Commission and educate those in attendance as to its mission and future plans. As an example, Ms. White asked Mr. Stanley how many acres in New London are under

easement. Mr. Stanley said that the recommended amount is 25 %. New London currently has only 15%. The surrounding towns all have this recommended easement percentages, but New London does not.

Mr. Stanley also said that it would be a good idea to give the members of the Budget Committee an overview of the agreement made with the Budget Committee and the Conservation Committee some years ago in which the Conservation Commission agreed to forego the accumulation of large sums of money over which the Town would then have had no control. The Commission is permitted, by statute, to have a Conservation Fund into which any surplus from the Commission's annual budget, as well as any earmarks can be accumulated and all they need to do to spend it is by motion at a public hearing. Some years ago the NL Conservation Commission agreed to establish a capitol reserve and not make contributions to a Conservation Fund and use the accumulation in CIP which could then be spent at the discretion at Town Meeting where there is now a substantial amount of oversight. That is how the Capitol Reserve came into existence. Ms. Stanley will develop a time-line of this evolution so that it can be shared at the next Budget Committee meeting on December 4th. Chair Norman said he would be able to attend and encouraged other members to be there as well.

Members generally felt that the CIP item, if it were to be reduced, should not be cut to zero. Mr. Stanley questioned Ms. Levine whether or not it was possible at Town Meeting to have a motion from the floor to amend the CIP line item in order to add "x" amount to the existing CIP budget. She responded that she thought you could, whether it is a line item or not, a motion could be made to that affect. Ms. Levine was thanked for her attendance at the meeting. She then excused herself.

TRAILS:

Mr. Allen reported that he and a groups of volunteers and Commission members have been working hard on maintaining four of the trails. He and a few others went up to the Interpretive Trail at the intersection if the Town of Wilmot and New London to install two bridges arranged by Dave Cook.

Last Sunday, he and others went to Clark Lookout and cut most of the saplings and haul them to the dump. He also cut some pine trees which were then dumped them over the ledge. Mr. Stanley said that not this year, but perhaps next, he would check with the availability of construction equipment to go over the edge in the winter when the ground was frozen, cut the trees, cable them up and salvage those that were usable and chip-up the others. Mr. Allen said it would be useful to have a ramp built that would enable a vehicle to get down in the gully. Mr. Stanley was not sure this could be done due to the conservation land easement restrictions but he would check.

Clark Pond Trail: Mr. Allen reported that they have had two work session there and are 2/3's of the way to the end of the trail. Mr. Crane said that the trail is now on the web site, complete with pictures. There is another work session scheduled for Friday morning, November 21 at 8:00A.M. Mr. Allen wondered if bridges could be built over the wetlands. Mr. Stanley replied that he could do so with a permit as long as the bridges

went from dry land to dry land. If the wetlands or easement was involved then a permit would be needed. If handicapped access is being considered in the future, then heavy equipment will need to be obtained to move the boulders and smooth out the trail. This would require obtaining grant money for this project. Mr. Allen and Mr. Brown requested that Mr. Darcy make a sign indicating **Private Property No Trespassing Beyond This Point** which could be posted at the end of the Clark Pond Trail.

Cricenti Bog: Mr. Allen reported that planks have been moved around to create a boardwalk on the right-hand loop. There is now a boardwalk that goes out to the corner. The boardwalk is not yet completed to the wood side, but will be on the agenda for this spring. Ms. White reported that the boardwalk on the right loop needs to be better supported.

Ms. White reported that more boards are needed at Low Plain, near the beaver dam. The trails are now so wet they are not passable without going through some water. It is not now possible to get into the second blind at all due to the wet areas. She also mentioned that the two tin roofs which had been replaced are laying beside the blinds. She thought these should be removed this winter.

Ms. White and Mr. Dancy requested permission to reprint more maps for the Bog. Permission was granted for 2000 more maps. Mr. Stanley suggested that a sign be posted requesting that the maps be returned after use rather than just taken by the visitor.

Ms. White mentioned that a Geocache location is on a closed trail at the Low Plain esker one. She said that she logged into the web site and notified them that this trail had been closed in the year 2000. Mr. Stanley recommended that she inform them that this trail has been closed and request that the cache be removed.

Mr. Crane noted that the trail between Lyon Brook and Parkside is in need of some repair.

MASTER PLAN:

Mr. Stanley said that this does not have to be completed until February. He has made an initial cut and is working on the recommendations now, updating tables and such to reflect current addresses, etc. He is re-thinking the statement on agricultural land use, since NL has a considerable amount of land used for agriculture. Spring Ledge uses 35 acres of land for agriculture, Over 100 acres is maintained for harvesting hay crop, other land is used for sheep, cattle, goats, etc. He said that NL has a significant amount of agricultural soils that are on both the State list and the Federal list and we need to identify them in the Master Plan. The Town also needs to recognize the importance of agriculture and start thinking about what role this plays, especially from a planning standpoint. It is now possible to have an Agricultural Commission in every town. Ms. White suggested that we should get a group of residents interested in this issue, through newspaper articles and informational meetings throughout the coming year. Mr. Stanley said he would look at the statutes to see what the requirements are. Mr. Stanley suggested that he draft a re-write of the Master Plan section on the issue of Agricultural in NL, subject to the

Commission's review and approval. In this draft he would recommend that the Town establish an Agricultural Commission. Mr. Stanley was tasked with moving forward with this article. This draft will be done in time for the December meeting.

Ms. White mentioned an article from the NH Market Bulletin, "Voices for Agriculture" which highlighted the need to strengthen local farming and agriculture in NH. At a recent meeting on sustaining local farms and agriculture, representatives explored "ways of managing the expected growth and development, setting goals of increasing the amount of food, fiber produced and consumed locally".

OTHER BUSINESS:

Chair Norman reported that he was recently given from the Lake Sunapee Protective Association an article recommending the reduce operation of bubblers. Mr. Darcy said that these protect the lakes from freezing, and also protect docks. There was no further discussion on this topic.

Chair Norman said that Town report time is coming up. He will work on a draft but if any members have any ideas as to what would be included, please let him know.

He asked about the beaver situation at Columbus Avenue. Mr. Stanley reported that this problem has been addressed but that we need to be aggressive in the future to prevent this from occurring again. He said the pipe under Columbus Avenue is currently plugged and will need to be cleaned out. Once the pond freezes a little, Richard Lee plans to clear this culvert out.

Mr. Allen said that this evening the Kearsage Sunapee Men's Group will meet at Tracey Memorial Library. He will be showing slides from his trip to Labrador and invited those interested to attend.

Mr. Allen also mentioned that the Conservation Commission has about 30 volunteers and suggested that the Commission do something to honor them. He and his wife have suggested that there be Pot Luck in January at the Historical Society. The Allen's have volunteered to cover the cost of the facility rental. The Commission thought this was a good idea and applauded his efforts.

Mr. Stanley reported that there have been a lot of projects completed on the lakes as a result of the draw down. So far, it looks as though everything has been completed without any erosion issues. The level of Pleasant Lake will be going up the end of this week, once the gate is finished.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:25P.M.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathleen K. Colby
Recording Secretary