

Town of Swanzey, New Hampshire  
**Board of Selectmen**  
**Joint Meeting with the Conservation Commission and Open Space Committee**  
Meeting Minutes – January 7, 2013

**The Joint meeting was called to order** by Selectboard Chair Deborah J. Davis at 5:02 p.m.

**Present from the Board of Selectmen:** Deborah J. Davis, Nancy L. Carlson, and Kenneth P. Colby, Jr.

**Present from the Open Space Committee:** Kenneth Colby, Jr., Selectmen's representative, Jeanne Thieme, Chairman, Paula Shank, Judy Hildebrandt, Beverly Bernard, Sharon Greatbatch, and Theresa DiLuzio. **Absent:** Bob McKelvey, Deb Crowder

**Present from the Conservation Commission:** Robert Goodrich, Richard Dell'Erba, Jane B. Johnson, Gary Coburn, Michael Morrison, Theresa DiLuzio. **Absent:** Stephen Stepenuck, Deb Crowder

**Others Present:**

Brian Johnsen and Jeff Snitkin of Bay State Forestry Service, Steve Roberge of the University of New Hampshire Extension Office, representatives of the Stewards of Mt. Caesar Advisory Committee, Town Planner Sara Carbonneau, Town Administrator Shane O'Keefe, as well as several residents of the Town of Swanzey

**NEW BUSINESS**

**Timber Harvest Proposal**

The Mt. Caesar timber harvest proposal submitted by Bay State Forestry Services was considered. Brian Johnsen wrote the plan for the Mt. Caesar property ten years ago. Johnsen reported that the plan was flexible in that harvesting of the trees could be done in stages. The plan included a parcel of land owned by the Town of Swanzey in Westmoreland. Johnsen said that the wood chip market is good right now so it is a good time to harvest. The idea is to harvest some of the trees in order to allow more sunlight and nutrients to reach younger trees. Johnson reported that Rachael Schnyer owns land next to pink area on the map he created and needs to be considered. The forestry consultants painted 250,000 board feet of trees to identify them for harvesting. He recommended that a good deal of hemlock should be removed because it outcompetes some of the other trees. Low grade material is removed and run through a chipper which then goes to create biomass power. Johnsen addressed an Email from resident Michael Duffin forwarded by Town Administrator Shane O'Keefe : it asked about the operational logistics of the harvest. Johnsen stated that it is easier to do a large harvest, and more costly if you are only doing twenty (20) acres. It becomes feasible when there are over fifty (50) acres to harvest. The harvesting will earn the Town as much money as possible. Harvest plan is to create opportunities for more harvesting in the future. Forest crowns competing for light and nutrients slow down the forest growth. Another email question was about the impact on recreational use of the land. Johnson said that the management plan specifically addressed the forest resource, and the Board of Selectmen needs to address the areas for recreation, which is not his purview. Another question asked about the financial details. Johnsen said that he didn't have that information. He repeated that the forest is overcrowded and that means that growth is slowing. There are trees dying and falling over which aren't being captured for their wood. Poorer quality trees are crowding out more valuable trees. He said that harvesting will increase the number of food source trees like oaks which produce acorns. Johnsen said that he will be putting out to

bid the logging work, if authorized by the Selectmen, and estimates that it will bring to the Town between \$40,000 to \$50,000.

Francis Faulkner, in charge of the Town's cemetery, spoke about the large pines leaning into the cemetery near the old markers. He would like to see that those trees are taken down.

Steve Roberge walked the cemetery area with the Town Swanzey Department of Public Works Manager Lee Dunham and saw the pine trees. Some are healthy, but some are not and pines are a safety concern.

Theresa DiLuzio said that she would like to see the stone wall preserved along the cemetery. Johnsen responded that would be the goal. Skidding would be done between the two stone walls. DiLuzio asked if the harvesting would look like the other harvest that has been done on Route 32 (an area privately owned which has been recently clear cut). Johnsen said that their harvest would not be as heavy as that.

Michael Morrison asked about road erosion. He asked about harvesting including upgrading the road to ease the erosion, but Johnsen said it would cost extra dollars to do that. He estimated that it would cost more than \$20,000 to fix the problem. Morrison said that there is a ban on ATVs, but people use them anyway, which adds to erosion.

Roberge pointed out that the only effective way to ease erosion is to keep out people and equipment.

DiLuzio asked about Buckthorn (invasive species). Johnsen said they can address it, but it would require two or three applications over a few years and that pricing is usually by the hour or by the acre. Harvesting will likely create some spread of the Buckthorn said Johnsen, but dragging trees out of the woods less likely to spread the Buckthorn than if you were pulling trees into the woods.

Michael Duffin of Eaton Road spoke about the plan done in 2003 and said that in his reading of the plan, recreation was a main goal. He said that hiking trails exist in orange section slated for harvesting in the plan and that seems a conflict between using logging equipment and also accommodating recreational activity. Johnsen said it takes time to see growth come back. Loggers cannot avoid trail junctions - his philosophy is to treat the harvest area the same regardless if there is a hiking trail. New growth will happen. Duffin said that the plan doesn't address recreational use. Johnsen said that if the Town asked for specific guidelines, they could accommodate it like creating buffer zones around trails.

Hildebrandt asked about the trails and whether or not the trails would stay open after the harvesting was completed. Johnsen said that the trails will stay open if people use the trails. Hildebrandt asked about whether the Town has trail management plan. Independent trail creation should be addressed.

Duffin asked about the viability of trail management so we can give foresters more clarity. Mike Lilly who was on the Stewards of Mt. Caesar Advisory Committee pointed out that the Advisory Committee had a hard time getting anyone to join. They had a public hearing, but no one came.

Jane Johnson pointed out that unharvested forests also change from falls on trails. Bay State's Johnsen said you have to appreciate harvesting over time.

Duffin asked about options for trail management. Colby stated that hiring Bay State was meant to be the

first step in a viable plan to invigorate an older and deteriorating forest. Morrison and Roberge agreed.

Colby said that the Board is trying to do this in a prudent way. He mentioned the Open Space Committee's work on trails and benches. Colby said that maybe what the Town can do pertinent to Duffin's concerns is limited, but we will try to do our best. Carlson talked about the gate, signs, to keep out ATVs - yet it is townspeople who are disobeying and ignoring the signs, and bypassing the gate with ATVs which create erosion on the trails. Townspeople have to buy in to plan for trail management. Carlson pointed out the land is available for recreation. Davis said the loggers will have a minimum impact as they can. The loggers will be in there for five weeks over the next year and we will see benefits in the long run. Jane Johnson suggested that once the harvesting is going on, it might get people's attention.

Johnson talked about land directly behind the Carpenter Home/cemetery to determine what to do with that land. It could be used for haying or corn.

Bruce Bohannon suggested that Keene should be contacted regarding cutting back area around the beacon on top of Mr. Cresson.

Thieme mentioned to Duffin that the Open Space Committee and Conservation Commission meetings are open to the public and the times and dates are on the Town web site so he is certainly welcome to join those meetings any time.

O'Keefe said that they need to move forward as soon as possible. Johnsen said it could be July before work would be done (July - Aug or Sept) or they would be in there right now through spring. The loggers would get a year contract to complete their work (through March 2014.)

## **LAND ACQUISITION**

### **Acquisition of Property at 53 Main Street**

Carlson asked Carbonneau to summarize the status of the property under the purchase and sales agreement. Carbonneau said no site analysis reports have been completed as yet but she could summarize the decision making process. She said that the statute requires feedback from the Planning Board and Conservation Commission before the Board of Selectmen can make a final decision. This meeting tonight is about letting the Open Space Committee and Conservation Commission have comments and ask questions. She stated that the idea is for a park with river access, turning the property into a park, not ball fields. She said that there will be a dry hydrant installed on the property. The proposed source of funding is Capital Reserve Land Acquisition account to be used for recreational purposes.

O'Keefe said the account has \$250,000 in it. He noted that the owners of the Homestead Woolen Mill have approached the Town about installation of a dry haydrant on the site and that Fire Chief Norm Skantze wants a second hydrant installed at the site to address fire suppression needs. Carlson asked if the Fire Chief has spoken to the Brown family. O'Keefe said the Town has funds to provide a hydrant. Hydrant will be installed at the far Northeast corner of the property. The Open Space Committee & Conservation Commission were asked to have a response by 5:00 p.m. on Friday to O'Keefe.

Thieme said that the Open Space Committee is excited about the prospect. Thieme asked about Jeff

Goller being involved in the planning for the park since he is a Landscape Architect and Carlson mentioned that he already has volunteered to help.

DiLuzio said that perhaps we should put an easement on the land. Carbonneau noted that if the Board decided to use the land for some other usage, the money would have to be replaced in the fund.

O'Keefe said the Town can't put an easement on its own land, but could place a covenant upon it.

Carbonneau said that the property price had been going down and with sewer access it would have become attractive for usages that the Town might not want.

The Board of Selectmen is excited about the prospect for the usage of the land also.

Mike Morrison mentioned 75/25 matching fund for environmental education. Randy Curtis at the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department would be the one to talk to. Colby pointed out that we have to finalize the deal first.

**Rather than respond in a document to O'Keefe by Friday, January 11<sup>th</sup>, the two committees decided to vote immediately so that the vote would be recorded in the Minutes of the meeting and the Minutes would serve as confirmation of a response from both committees.**

**A vote was taken by the Open Space Committee. Thieme moved to support the acquisition of the property to be used as a riverside park, seconded by Hildebrandt, with all in favor. *Motion passed.***

**A vote was taken by the Conservation Commission. Morrison moved to support the acquisition of the property to be used as a riverside park, seconded by Coburn, with all in favor. *Motion passed.***

Carlson moved to adjourn, Colby seconded, all were in favor, motion passed.

**Adjournment at 6:25 p.m.**

Respectfully Submitted,



Beverly Bernard, Recording Secretary

Approved on January 15, 2013