

Town of Swanzev, New Hampshire
Conservation Commission Meeting
Meeting Minutes – May 4, 2015

CALL TO ORDER

The regular meeting of the Swanzev Conservation Commission was called to order by Vice Chair Wally Smith at 4:03 p.m. at Swanzev Town Hall. Committee Members Present: Gary Coburn, Wally Smith, Bob Goodrich, Mike Morrison, Ric Dell’Erba, and Stephen Stepenuck.

ABSENT

Jane Johnson

OTHERS PRESENT

None

MINUTES

- Minutes of April 6, 2015 were considered. **Motion** by Morrison to approve the Minutes of April 6, 2015. There was a second from Coburn. All were in favor. ***Motion passed.***

CONCERNS

Chris Guida

Smith said he got a note from a Chris Guida, with Fieldstone Consultants, to get on the Conservation Commission agenda. Smith said he tried to reach him, but without success. However, the Commission recalled that Guida was present at the April meeting and therefore the issue he had was taken care of at that meeting.

Camporee

Smith reported that Jon and Val Starbuck requested Conservation Commission participation in a Boy Scout Camporee event at the Humane Society. They asked if there were trees that the boys might cut down with chain saws. Smith pointed out that liability is an issue and the Commission could not participate.

Safety issues on Clean-up day in April

Stepenuck mentioned the need for a liability waiver for the cleanup held each spring. Also discussed was an idea providing safety vests to participants. Morrison mentioned the group giving safety instructions to participants in the annual clean-up in the past and planning for next year should include doing so.

Budget considerations

Smith reported that Conservation Commission spending has been quite low.

Municipal Facilities Committee

Smith mentioned that he is attending the Board of Selectmen’s meeting Tuesday evening as he has been asked to serve on a proposed Municipal Facilities Committee which will be up for discussion at Tuesday’s meeting.

Saving Special Places

Dell'Erba said he attended the meeting in April and he found it very interesting. He passed out a copy of a list of classes available and it was noted that there is money for members to attend some of the classes if they so choose.

Gravel Pit

Morrison mentioned that Barbara Skuly has a concern regarding the proposed permit application for the gravel pit on NH Route 10 to be increased to 80 feet. It was noted that the permit application has been withdrawn by the owners for now. Discussion was held about the possibility of creating an aquifer protection ordinance for the Town of Swanzey. Smith said he sent the email from Barbara Skuly to Town Administrator Shane O'Keefe noting that the Conservation Commission does not support increasing the gravel pit to 80 feet. The Commission did decide to pursue a possible Aquifer Protection Zone and Smith was referred to Director of Planning and Community Development Sara Carbonneau for information about the former Aquifer Protection group that was researching such an ordinance at one time in the past. The New Hampshire Association of Conservation Commissions was referred to for research and it was agreed to ask them for their help.

NEW BUSINESS

Election of Chair and Vice Chair

There was a discussion about electing a Chair.

Morrison made a **motion** to nominate Smith for Chair, second by Goodrich. There was no further discussion. All were in favor. ***Motion passed.***

There was a discussion about who would take on the role of Vice Chair.

Smith **moved** to nominate Stepenuck for Vice Chair and there was a second by Goodrich. All were in favor. ***Motion passed.***

Roadside Cleanup Results/Comments/Future Suggestions

Discussion was held regarding the size of the turnout for the Roadside Cleanup in April. 220 bags went out said Smith and he also noted that mostly older folks participated. Boy Scouts did not show up. Smith said one teenager walked in during the afternoon and was willing to participate. Stepenuck spoke about the Interact Club (service club) doing cleanup of the NH State roads. Smith asked about community service as requirement for graduation. Morrison spoke about seniors needing to do a senior project in order to graduate. Smith suggested getting the high school involved next year would be helpful.

Discussion was held about the number of bags that were available. Stepenuck said that 170 bags that were at Town Hall were "lost" but perhaps used for pre-date cleanup. Stepenuck had to acquire more bags for the day of the event itself. About 300 bags were used for cleanup of the roads. Stepenuck asked about leaving only a small number of the remaining bags at Town Hall and storing the rest somewhere else. Dell'Erba volunteered to take the bags and store them at his house. The Board agreed to leave one open box at Town Hall. Dell'Erba suggested creating new signs or re-doing the existing signs. Stepenuck suggested Mark Johnson be approached to re-do the signs. It was noted that Johnson also made the Riley property sign. Dell'Erba agreed to bring a sign to Johnson and ask him for a price estimate to provide all new signs.

Smith suggested planning for the annual spring event during the September meeting and the rest of the members agreed.

Anti-Dumping Ordinance - Selectman Actions April 7th Meeting

Smith said that at the Board of Selectmen's meeting of April 7th, they decided to create a committee to research further into what an anti-dumping ordinance should look like. Smith noted that Recycling Center Manager Bob Osterhout has been asked to participate in that committee.

Goodrich left at 4:42 p.m. to respond to a fire alarm.

Open Space Committee (OSC) appointment

Smith raised this issue and asked the Commission for their input. The Commission appoints one of their folks to attend the Open Space Committee meetings. Morrison mentioned that he thought Johnson offered to be the appointee. Goodrich suggested that the members of the Commission take turns representing the Conservation Commission so it is not a burden on one person. Morrison suggested having a common meeting with the Open Space Committee with all members present. Morrison referred to overlapping interest areas. Morrison mentioned tasks could be shared. Morrison said he would speak to Johnson and learn whether she wants to be the representative to the OSC, or whether the group should share the task on a quarterly basis in rotation.

Cheshire County Conservation District – Funding for potential Projects, if any

There was a discussion about financing South Branch Ashuelot River testing. Morrison said he would speak to them about helping with funding. Stepenuck reminded the group that the parking lot at the Cresson Bridge remains a source of pollution into the river. He said that this subject has been discussed in the past. He mentioned a rain garden has been discussed for the site. Stepenuck said that would be a logical place for a project. Also there is a safety issue regarding getting in and out of canoes at the bank where it is steep and being eaten away. Morrison said he would contact Amanda Littleton about the potential project for bank stabilization and possibly a rain garden. Stepenuck said he thought he understood that it would cost \$30,000 just to draw up the engineering plans for a project.

Goodrich returned to the meeting at 5:00 p.m.

OLD BUSINESS

NH Route 32 Survey and Access to Town Land

There was a discussion about access to Town land which is currently being restricted by the LaBarre family. Stepenuck noted that the Mr. and Mrs. LaBarre were invited to discuss further a small parking area for access to Town-owned land. He said that the current parking is unsafe since hikers must walk along NH Route 32 to reach the entrance to the Town land and to access Honey Hill conservation area. He noted that Mr. LaBarre did not want to speak to the Conservation Commission. Stepenuck also noted that John Bridges was hired to survey the land to determine the extent of Town owned land. But he didn't survey it. He referred to his records for the survey done for the old Belding Farm. It was also noted that Mr. LaBarre claims the Trailhead box is on his land. Morrison suggested that a survey be done for the rear of the property to determine where Town land meets land which belongs to LaBarre.

Stepenuck went on to say that Bridges said that since the Town owns a 100 foot strip of land, the Town should contact the New Hampshire Department of Transportation about access to the land from NH

Route 32. Bridges suggested an application for driveway permit to the State of New Hampshire. A culvert would be needed and a curb permit, which might be expensive. Smith questioned whether it is worth pursuing given the potential expense and Stepenuck said that safety for children is the issue. Stepenuck suggested that a proposal be made to Mr. and Mrs. LaBarre to buy a right-of-way of 30 feet to get to the Town's land. Stepenuck suggested that the Board of Selectmen get involved since the Belding family left land for a cemetery in the area, which now has no access without a driveway permit from the State of New Hampshire. Morrison suggested that the Board of Selectmen would be responsible for a decision. Coburn said that he felt that the property needs to be surveyed because electric fence posts have been erected on the property by Mr. LaBarre and they may be on Town land.

Goodrich mentioned that Public Works Director Lee Dunham might be able to assist with a driveway permit.

Motion was made by Stepenuck to get on the Agenda of the Board of Selectmen to discuss the issue of access to Town land from NH Route 32. Morrison seconded the motion. No further discussion and all were in favor. ***Motion passed.***

Morrison asked that John Bridges survey the land to determine the rear of the property and the position of the electric fence posts. Smith suggested that a survey be prepared before going to the Selectmen. Smith suggested asking Bridges to determine the cost of surveying the back end of the property and the cost to survey the entire property. The Commission agreed.

River Monitoring

There was a brief discussion about a request from Ashuelot River Local Advisory Committee (ARLAC) for \$100.00 to assist in funding for bacteria monitoring of the river during 2015.

Motion was made by Morrison to spend \$100.00 to monitor the main Ashuelot River. There was a second by Stepenuck. All were in favor, and the ***motion passed.***

Check to be made out to Barbara Skuly at ARLAC.

There was a general discussion about the action that is derived from posting of river monitoring results.

Mt. Cresson

Discussion followed about the fact that Wayne Young wanted to show the Commission members something on the trail. Stepenuck volunteered to call Young about a date to meet him at the southern end of the property.

Stepenuck said he has planks to cover the well house to make it safer. Need to set a date for a work party to remove old boards. Morrison mentioned that perhaps it is a Public Works issue. Smith said that Dunham has a lot of work to do and it won't be important enough for Dunham to make it a priority. Dell'Erba offered to help with signs and trail maintenance. Morrison suggested meeting on Monday, May 11, 2015 at 1:00 p.m. to fix the Cresson well house. The Commission agreed and there was a brief discussion about equipment and wood needed for the fix.

The following were moved to agenda next month:

- **Member Reading Assignments**

- **Swanzy Natural Resource Inventory**
- **Handbook for Conservation Commissions**

REPORTS

ARLAC

Stepenuck said that the new owner of the campground has agreed to be the representative.

Open Space Committee - Yale Forest Hike – Bernard noted the hike was popular and the need to remove some trees on Mt. Cresson to improve the view.

SWRP- NRC – no report

MAIL

Smith passed out information received from Nicholas Coates with the NH Association of Conservation Commissions about a Grant-Writing Workshop to be held in Peterborough, NH at which the focus will be on grants that conservation commissions have a good chance of winning. He referred members to a website if they are interested in attending.

Stepenuck noted that he will be attending a session on Wildlife Action Plan.

ADJOURNMENT

There was a motion to adjourn by Stepenuck with a second from Morrison. All were in favor. Adjournment occurred at 6:03 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Beverly Bernard, Recording Secretary