

Town of Swanzey, New Hampshire
Conservation Commission Meeting
Meeting Minutes – September 21, 2015

CALL TO ORDER

The regular meeting of the Swanzey Conservation Commission was called to order by Chair Wally Smith at 4:05 p.m. at Swanzey Town Hall. Committee Members Present: Chair Smith, Vice Chair Stepenuck, Bob Goodrich, Mike Morrison, and Beverly Bernard.

ABSENT

Jane Johnson, Ric Dell'Erba

OTHERS PRESENT

Bruce Bohannon, Fire Chief Norm Skantze

MINUTES

- Minutes of August 3, 2015 were considered. **Motion** by Stepenuck to approve the Minutes of August 3, 2015 with change to page 1 citing "vehicle tracks being somewhat unsafe due to erosion of the river bank", page 3, adding, "Extensive research has been done by Smith." There was a second from Goodrich. All were in favor. **Motion passed.**

NEW BUSINESS

California Brook project

Fire Chief Skantze noted that he has received a complaint from someone in regard to lowering the water at California Brook for that project. Skantze left the meeting at 4:06 p.m.

Rail Trail Funding request 2015/16

Bohannon provided a summary of what has been done in 2015 on the Rail Trail. Two bridges were repaired. Ash Swamp Brook Bridge was repaired with pressure-treated wood beams and decking. Also the railings on the bridge at the bridge south of Sawyers Crossing Road were repaired. The work was done by volunteers. Bohannon mentioned other tasks that were completed including some survey work and replacement of a culvert. Other tasks completed included removal of debris from the ditch, grading of the bed, laying down a 5-inch layer of stone dust, and then it was compacted. He noted that brush was cleaned back and debris removed from property which had been placed by neighbors. He mentioned Rail Trail Awareness Day to introduce to the public the new section and repairs to the bridges.

The next project is to refurbish the Rail Trail 1.37 miles from one intersection with Homestead Avenue to another intersection with Homestead Avenue. He said he is looking to hopefully receive a \$30,000 Recreational Trails Program Grant to help with the work to be done in 2016. But the work will cost more than that so he asked for \$10,000 from the Conservation Commission toward the Rail Trail Fund: \$5,000 in this calendar year and \$5,000 in next calendar year. Cost for the project is estimated at \$15.00/linear foot or approximately \$108,510. Discussion was held regarding the kinds of vehicles that can access the trail – no motorized wheeled vehicles. He noted that the Open Space Committee did contribute funds for the Rail Trail in the past.

Motion was made by Morrison to contribute \$5,000 in calendar year 2015 and \$5,000 in calendar year 2016 to the Rail Trail Fund. There was a second by Stepenuck, and all were in favor. **Motion passed.**

Bohannon left the meeting at 4:39 p.m.

Cresson/Thompson Bridge inspections (Steve Pytlik) Results, if available

Smith spoke about the meeting that was held and that there hasn't been a follow up as yet. Smith said he would follow up with Pytlik for his advice on proposal by Todd Bergeron for access to the river.

Solar Power – potential initiative – discussion

Smith spoke about lack of interest by the Municipal Facilities Review Committee regarding solar power. Smith said that he wasn't getting a sense of interest in installing solar power in public buildings. There was some discussion about the types of deals that are available. Smith suggested that the committee table the idea until there is more interest. Morrison suggested some collaboration with the Open Space Committee (OSC). Johnson is scheduled to attend the November meeting of the OSC and she could ask if the members of OSC would be interested in working with the Conservation Commission on the solar project. Discussion occurred about a commitment that forming an energy committee would take.

Stepenuck suggested the committee do the homework first and invite Code Enforcement Officer Mike Jasmin to answer any questions and the members agreed. Documentation provided by Jasmin included "Solarizing New Hampshire's Upper Valley and Beyond" was passed out to members to read and respond to.

Wayne Young trail walk – Suggestions, if any

Smith spoke about the walk that was done in the winter on land off Matthews Road (Cresson property) and he pointed to potential trails that could be opened in the future. Young proposed a timber cut to generate space for a parking lot and trails to connect to existing trails on Mt. Cresson. Young was going to provide a proposal but that didn't happen. It was proposed to invite Young to a meeting with the Conservation Commission, at his convenience, to provide a proposal for a parking lot and trails. Stepenuck showed a photo of litter of cans left in the current parking lot at Mt. Cresson trail-head. Stepenuck pointed out that there is \$16,272.22 in the Conservation Commission/Cresson Forest Fund that might be useful for creating a parking lot. He also spoke about signs that might be utilized for the area with the same funds. Morrison suggested that if Young can't write a proposal for the area, could he recommend someone to create a land use project for maintenance cut, parking lot, creation of trails, and adding signs. Stepenuck agreed to contact Young and invite him to join a Commission meeting.

Ryan Owens Executive Director Monadnock Conservancy – Conservation Presentation October 5th (Joint Session with Open Space Committee)

One hour slide presentation – Smith suggested that the presentation be done on Monday, November 2, 2015 from 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. since Owens cannot make the October 5, 2015 meeting. The Commission agreed. Smith will confirm Ryan Owens participation and Bernard will invite other committee members and board members once Smith confirms the agreed upon date.

West Swanzey Park Riverbank Permit violations

Discussion was held about the cutting of shrubs on the bank of the Ashuelot River at the West Swanzey Park and the granite steps that were placed on the bank of the river. Smith provided a copy of the directive from the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) to remove the steps. The letter also indicated that shrubs in the Waterfront Buffer can be trimmed to a minimum of three-feet in height. There was a brief discussion about Todd Bergeron's project to add a staircase to access the river and Smith said that there has been no further communication from Bergeron after his initial presentation. Smith said that he thought this is a project that has fallen by the wayside. Stepenuck said he would make an attempt to reach Bergeron.

New Grant Editing and Review Services from NHAAC (Yale Forest) – tabled until October

River Clean-up scheduled for September 25 and 26, 2015

Smith distributed detailed information about the event. Stepenuck said that weekend is also the Youth Water Fowl Weekend, which means young folks will be out on the river hunting water fowl during the clean-up and he expressed concern about the safety issues involved.

OLD BUSINESS

Muster Property Maintenance (Steve)

Smith spoke about a discussion he had with Director of Public Works Lee Dunham regarding safety issues on the property in regard to cars. He said the suggestion was raised to limit the cars to the small parking lot and allow only walking further down to the Muster property. Bernard suggested the idea of placing large boulders at the edge of the parking area. Morrison suggested a cable across the road.

Motion by was made Morrison to support the idea to limit cars to the small parking lot currently on the property and limit access to the rest of the property by walking. There was a second to the motion by Goodrich. All were in favor except Stepenuck who abstained. **Motion passed.**

Stepenuck spoke about contacting Forester Steve Roberge for any recommendations regarding bush-hogging the land. Morrison said he could meet Stepenuck and Roberge at 2:30 p.m. on Monday, September 28, 2015 to walk the land and get Roberge feedback. They will meet at the parking lot.

Ashuelot River Landing – Bergeron Project (Status)

Stepenuck suggested that an attempt be made to contact him once again and he will do so.

Open Space Rotation Assignments – October/November (Jane?)/December

Johnson will attend in November. Morrison will attend in October. Bernard will attend in December.

Aquifer concerns (Discussion) – tabled until October

NH Assoc. of Conservation Commissions – Annual Dues Authorization \$ 363.00

Motion was made by Morrison to pay the bill for annual dues to the NH Association of Conservation Commissions for \$363.00. There was a second by Goodrich. Smith said the Association sponsored a good session at Stonewall Farms last week that he attended. All were in favor. **Motion passed.**

Anti-Dumping Ordinance – Status (Beverly/Wally)

A brief discussion was held about wording for a new ordinance that might pass muster with property owners concerned about any restricted uses of their properties. Bernard mentioned the possibility of preparing a health ordinance which would include references to trash and litter. It was noted that Health Officer Pam Fortner may be able to assist in this matter.

REPORTS

Open Space Committee - no report

SWRPC – no report

ARLAC – no report

Municipal Facility Review Committee (MFRC) Report - FYI

Smith passed out summary of MFRC report to the members for their information.

MAIL

- NH Fish and Game Department - Donation Request \$250.00 – the Commission decided to take no action after discussion.
- NH Assoc. of Conservation Commissions Annual Meeting November 7th – at Pembroke Academy in Pembroke, NH. Morrison said that members have attended in the past and there is a small fee. Smith said he thought about attending.
- 21 Lake Shore Road – complaint Wilson Pond Shoreland – Smith pointed out that NHDES provides an “inspector of the day” service available to the public to address technical questions related to wetland and shoreland regulations.
- Hale Hill road (at Falls Brook) Additional info request NHDES sent to Lee Dunham
- Vermont Fish and Game Department – regarding private sponsoring of children

Goodrich said he questioned the idea of using pressure-treated boards on the Rail Trail.

October 5, 2015 was confirmed by the members for the next meeting date.

ADJOURNMENT

There was a **motion** to adjourn by Morrison with a second from Bernard. All were in favor. Adjournment occurred at 6:37 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Beverly Bernard, Recording Secretary