

Town of Swanzey, New Hampshire
Conservation Commission Meeting
Meeting Minutes – February 1, 2016

Note: Minutes are subject to review, correction, and approval by the Commission. Review, correction, and approval of minutes generally occur at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Commission.

CALL TO ORDER

The regular meeting of the Swanzey Conservation Commission was called to order by Chair Wally Smith at 4:00 p.m. at Town Hall. Committee Members Present: Chair Smith, Vice Chair Stepenuck, Bob Goodrich, Mike Morrison, Jane Johnson and Beverly Bernard.

ABSENT

None

OTHERS PRESENT

Stacey Gambrel from the Monadnock Conservancy, Chair of the Open Space Committee Victoria Ames, Open Space Committee members Jeanne Thieme and Sharon Greatbatch, Ken Goebel, Stuart Adams and Town Administrator Michael Branley.

MINUTES

- Minutes of January 4, 2016 were considered. **Motion** by Morrison to approve the Minutes of January 4, 2016. There was a second from Johnson. All were in favor. **Motion passed.**

NEW BUSINESS

Conservation Easement Opportunity - Overview - Stacey Gambrel Monadnock Conservancy

Adams farm land on South Winchester Street is the property under consideration. The family that owns the land also owns Stuart and Johns. Gambrel said that she would provide information about the proposal, but it is very early in the easement process. She said Stuart uses this land to support a portion of his dairy operation. She said the intent is to keep the land open to hunting and fishing. Gambrel also spoke about the project budget which is approximately \$341,811. She said that they are seeking grant funds and she listed some of the potential sources of funds. She also said she would be returning to the Conservation Commission for help with funding sometime in the future.

Smith asked about a timeframe for completion of the easement process and Gambrel said it would go to the end of 2017 before an easement would be completed. Ames spoke about the previous easement funding that the Town provided. Morrison asked about funding through Silvio Conte or Quabbin to Cardigan programs and Gambrel said she was going to look into funding from Silvio Conte. Adams spoke about the land being adjacent to the river. She noted there is a conservation easement on the home farm in Westmoreland.

Bernard asked how often the Conservation Commission would get updates and Gambrel said that in the spring or summer we might hear about any updates. Smith asked if a monthly update would be possible, and Gambrel said that she could provide an email update to Smith on a monthly basis.

Goebel asked Adams about the 2017 date for closing and how that would impact Adams and he said he was okay with that and he understood the time needed to accomplish the deal. Goodrich asked about cutting of trees on the property and Adams said that they maintained trees on the river. He said they cleared a couple of acres, and he said he got approval for the cutting from the proper authorities. Stepenuck said he didn't see any erosion and spoke about someone complaining about the cutting. He spoke about a buffer being maintained. Smith invited Adams to come and talk to the Conservation Commission at any time. Ames asked for permission for a site visit for the Open Space Committee to identify public benefits to the town. Smith thanked Gambrel for attending the meeting.

Morrison left the meeting at 4:15 p.m. As did Gambrel and Adams.

Smith spoke briefly about Mike Morrison attending the Bobcat public hearing being provided by the State of New Hampshire.

Electronic Communications - Meetings; Right-to-Know Law; E-Mail

Branley spoke about email communications involving more than a quorum being prohibited by the Right-to-Know law unless it is solely distributing information. Anything more, he said, should not be done by email, and instead done in a meeting. Debates cannot be conducted over email. There was a discussion about when a meeting is a meeting and how decisions are made. Smith also noted that site visits must be Noticed as well to the public.

There was a discussion about the availability of webinars and workshops for information on the Right-to-Know laws.

Nature Conservancy Connecticut River Report

Smith provided a report on major findings. There was no discussion.

Muster Property - Roberge Report

The report from Roberge was shared with the members. The report stated that the land is in good shape and the Conservation Commission could try to alleviate some of the invasive species on the property. There was discussion about arranging for someone for brush-hogging the land in the fall. Smith made a note to put the issue on the Agenda for August of this year.

Stepenuck suggested that the members consider relocating the road.

Johnson **moved** to consider the idea of relocation of the road at the Muster property in the spring. Bernard seconded the motion, and all were in favor except for Stepenuck who abstained.
Motion passed.

Cresson Mountain; Wayne Young Timber Harvest Proposal Bruce Berry inspection/recommendations

Smith said he hasn't been able to contact Bruce Berry yet, so it will be delayed to next meeting.

Roadside Cleanup

Smith asked about whether or not to conduct the cleanup this year. There was a discussion about lack of young folks being involved. Stepenuck said that if we can get to the Scout Leaders, they usually can provide young folks to help out with the cleanup. Johnson, Bernard, and Goodrich said that they thought

the cleanup should continue. Smith asked if there was a volunteer to head up the planning. Johnson volunteered to be in charge and suggested Saturday April 30, 2016. The members agreed. Earth Day is the 22nd of April. It was noted that School Vacation is the week of April 18 through 22nd. Johnson is the Chair and Bernard is the Vice Chair.

Terry Bolster Multi-Tenant Application

The application was considered. It was noted that the request is for a business of antiques and collectibles in an existing building. The consensus of the members was that there were no issues/comments/ or concerns.

Conservation Camp funding

The members considered making a donation for this cause as is done each year. Johnson said that the kids should meet with us before they apply. There was a discussion about the lack of good writing in the thank you notes send to the Commission in the past. Johnson said she would help them out with applications.

Motion was made by Stepenuck to award two scholarships to Conservation Camp and to expend up to \$600 for this purpose, second by Johnson, and no further discussion. All were in favor. ***Motion passed.***

L & G Propane Variance Application

The application of L&G Propane was discussed. The location is near the Scrap It business just off State Route 12. There will be a public hearing on February 8, 2016 at the Swanzey Zoning Board of Adjustment. Smith said that he has questions about security, given the possibility of terrorist activity. Discussion continued about the danger inherent in having the tanks nearby to a major state highway. Smith said that he would attend the ZBA meeting.

Beverly Schedule - Need minutes assistance March 7th meeting

Smith said that Branley would provide someone to take minutes while Bernard is away.

OLD BUSINESS

Aquifer Protection Ordinance

Bernard and Johnson spoke about what has been done thus far. Bernard said that she and Johnson got together and started working on a plan which included the idea of establishing a sub-committee that would include a member of the Planning Board and activist Barbara Skuly. Johnson said she tried to reach Skuly to talk to her about the possibility but was unable to reach her. Johnson said that we could start with the State of New Hampshire template. Johnson also said she would try to get in touch with someone with UNH. Stepenuck said he would be willing to work with Johnson and Bernard.

Open Space Rotation

- February - Bernard; March - Johnson; April - Stepenuck

Anti-Dumping Ordinance

Smith noted that the ordinance is on the Warrant for 2016.

REPORTS

- ARLAC - none
- Open Space –
 - **Ballou Family Conservation Easement** - Ames provided a report to the Conservation Commission pending the conservation easement for the Ballou Family Revocable Trust property on Matthews Road which said that the Selectmen have approved a request for a public hearing. There is not a date yet for the public hearing. Ames pointed out that the Conservation Commission could support the permanent protection of the land. Discussion continued regarding whether the public could access the property including the river, without permission of the owner. Ames spoke about the terms of the easement being modified such that the Town has an interest in the property and that the easement will be reviewed by Town Counsel. Branley asked for support for the proposed acquisition. Stepenuck said that that he would need to see the easement and have it confirmed that there was public access before he could approve

Motion was made by Bernard to approve the Ballou Family Revocable Trust conservation easement project contingent upon review of the easement and that there be a provision for public access for all lawful purposes. There was a second by Smith. Discussion continued that this simply provides feedback to the Selectmen. The Chair called for a vote. There were three ayes, one nay, and one abstention. **Motion passed.**

Next Meeting Date: March 7, 2016

ADJOURNMENT

There was a **motion** to adjourn by Johnson with a second from Goodrich. All were in favor. Adjournment occurred at 6:02 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Beverly Bernard, Recording Secretary