

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

**Present at the Meeting from the Conservation Commission:**

The regular meeting of the Swanzey Conservation Commission was called to order at 4:00 p.m. by Robert Goodrich, Vice Chair. Committee Members Present: Richard Dell’Erba, Jane B. Johnson, Gary Coburn, Michael Morrison

Minutes of December 4, 2012: **Motion** by Morrison to accept, Coburn seconded, all were in favor.  
***Motion passed.***

**Absent:** Theresa DiLuzio, Stephen Stepenuck, Deb Crowder

**OLD BUSINESS**

**Wilson Pond Setbacks** – A discussion was held regarding the approval of the Town of Swanzey Planning Board to place an article in the spring 2013 Warrant recommending the existing 125 foot wetland setback be changed to a 50 foot setback in keeping with the wetland setback supported by the State of New Hampshire. The Warrant will be voted on by the voters of the Town of Swanzey. The Conservation Commission is not in favor of the change. Coburn suggested that members write editorials before the vote in support of maintaining the 125 ft setback. Morrison suggested that perhaps the Keene Sentinel newspaper would run an article about the support of the State of New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NH DES) for the 125 foot setback. Dell’Erba asked about the appeal process. Morrison said he believes it is best to rely on the voters of the town. Morrison offered to contact the Sentinel to do an environmental piece. He said a Monday article, which is the day the newspaper usually runs environmental articles, would be good timing for the vote on a Tuesday. He offered to speak to Nicole Coleson. Also discussed was the idea of the Committee creating a letter to send to residents, an informational piece, perhaps a postcard, which might be accomplished with the help of the Open Space Committee (OSC).

**Bosworth Rehearing** – it was noted by Goodrich that the family requesting an Equitable Waiver of Dimensional Requirements were granted the waiver by the Zoning Board of Adjustment.

**Cutting Trees at Honey Hill and Mt. Cresson** – Goodrich and Morrison did not get a chance to look at the mountain crests to determine which trees and shrubs needed to be cut back in order to enhance the

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view. David Roy has offered to cut back some of the greenery for \$500 and Morrison was going to get prices from other loggers in comparison. However, the members decided to wait until spring and to table the discussion until DiLuzio can be in attendance.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**Dealing with mail and other correspondence** – Goodrich stated that not much mail is coming in. Goodrich distributed the few pieces of mail he had acquired and the members reviewed them. No action taken.

**Concern with Yale Forest** – a discussion was held about the commission’s concern over the future of Yale Forest. Morrison reported that Yale folks value the land as a study subject for its longevity.

**Correspondence from the NH DES regarding 3 Houghton Point South, Tax Map 18, Lot 174** - sand piles are being put next to the water. The NH DES notified the commission that it is following up with the land owner and looking for wetland permits.

**Wetlands Permit Application for Maple Hill Nursery (driveway crossing) off Route 10.** This was information provided to the commission and no action required.

**SWRPC Natural Resource Committee** – Morrison stated that the committee did not meet.

**Open Space Committee activity** – Bernard reported some of the activity of the OSC, primarily the placing of wooden benches on easement property trails at Mt. Cresson, Honey Hill, and Mt. Caesar.

**Treasurer's report** - \$69, 771.64 is remaining in the Conservation Commission budget.

Goodrich **moved** to adjourn, Coburn seconded, all were in favor. **Motion passed** and adjournment at 4:50 p.m. The members remained at Town Hall to participate in the joint meeting with the Board of Selectmen and the Open Space Committee.

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**JOINT MEETING OF THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN, THE OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE, AND THE CONSERVATION COMMISSION**

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

**Present at Meeting 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

**Others Present:**

Selectmen of the Town: Chair Deborah J. Davis, Nancy L. Carlson, and Kenneth P. Colby, Jr., the members of the Conservation Commission as stated above, Steve Roberge of the University of New Hampshire Extension Office, and 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 timber harvest proposal submitted by Bay State Forestry Services was considered. Brian E. 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 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 which have greater board foot value. Johnsen reported that Rachel Schneider owns land next to pink area on the map he created and needs to be considered. The forestry people 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 some Email received by Town Administrator Shane O'Keefe : one 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 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. Johnsen 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 email 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

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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 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 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 Swanzeey Department of Public Works Manager Lee Dunham and saw the pine trees. Some are healthy, but some are not and pines are a 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 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 on Eaton Rd 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 Lilley who was on the Mt. Caesar advisory committee pointed out that the Mt. Caesar 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 Johnsen said you have to appreciate harvesting over time.

Duffin asked about options for trail management. Hiring Bay State was a 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 OSC'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 and we will see benefits in the long run. Jane Johnsen suggested that once the harvesting is going on, it might get people's attention.

Johnsen talked about land behind 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 OSC and Conservation Commission meetings are open to the public and the times and dates are on the 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 will 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 sales agreement. Carbonneau said no reports have been completed as yet but she could summarize the decision making process. She said that the statute requires feedback from OSC and Conservation Commission before the Board can make a final decision. This meeting tonight is about letting the OSC 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 Fire Chief Norm Skantze wants two fire hydrants installed at the site. 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 OSC & Conservation Commission must have a response by 5:00 p.m. on Friday to O'Keefe.

Thieme said that the OSC 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 the 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 was going down and with sewer access it would have become attractive for usages that the Town might not want.

The Board 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 Fish and Game 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**

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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.**

The Board of Selectmen (except for Colby) and other residents in attendance left the meeting

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**OPEN SPACE MEETING** - Thieme called the meeting to order at 6:28 p.m. Present were Kenneth Colby, Jr., Selectmen's representative, Chairman Jeanne Thieme, Paula Shank, Judy Hildebrandt, Beverly Bernard, Sharon Greatbatch, and Theresa DiLuzio.

**Absent:** Bob McKelvey, Deb Crowder

Members of the Conservation Commission Vice-Chair Goodrich, Johnson, Coburn, Dell'Erba and Morrison were present. Also present Mary Farnsworth.

**Deliberative Session - 7:00 p.m. at MRHS** - Thieme reminded the members of the upcoming deliberative session. She pointed out the need for members to be present and to be prepared to answer questions that might arise during the session. Colby recommended that someone from the OSC be in attendance for budget hearing January 15th. Bernard will be there.

Thieme passed out copies of the new OSC brochures. The brochures are given out to residents who have questions about the work of the OSC.

**Yale Forest discussion:**

Thieme talked about the idea of initiating a project with Yale. DiLuzio and Thieme are going to meet with Steve Roberge and Ryan Owens ,Executive Director for the Monadnock Conservancy, to get feedback

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about Yale and its interest in the future of the land.

**Treasurer's Report** - Hildebrandt didn't have the latest budget. The committee spent money on trail benches and printing of brochures. Balance in the account will be \$2,000 once the bills are paid.

**Conservation Commission report** - Jane Johnson had a question about the expenditure that the OSC does for mailing postcards to residents in town. The Conservation Commission is considering the idea of sending postcards to residents in support of maintaining the 125 foot setback requirement for wetlands. Thieme said that in the 2011 budget \$522.00 was spent on postage for the postcards and postcard printing cost \$370.00, for a total of about \$800.00.

**Members Term dates were discussed:** Mary Farnsworth is interested in joining the committee. A discussion was held about renewing existing membership and about adding an Alternate position to the committee. The member term dates area as follows:

Jeanne 2014

Theresa - 2015

Sharon - 2013

Deb - 2014

Bob - 2013

Beverly - 2015

Paula - 2015

Judy - 2014

Sharon stated that she will re-join. Bob was not in attendance but his membership is also up in 2013. Thieme pointed out that the Chair position ends in March 2013. At the February meeting the members need to think about a Chair. Thieme has done it for two years and she believes it is a good thing to rotate Chairs. She will remain on the committee if someone else will be Chair. Thieme says we need an alternate position which helps fill in when regular members are absent for long periods of time. There is a process to get an alternate according to Carbonneau. Colby said he would find out how to make Mary Farnsworth an Alternate.

Colby made a **motion** that an Alternate be established for the Open Space Committee with Mary Farnsworth as that Alternate, seconded by Hildebrandt. All were in favor. **Motion passed.**

Hildebrandt and Thieme will be at Deliberative session. Thieme will make up copies of history of OSC for members who don't have it.

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**Adjournment called by DiLuzio, seconded by Bernard, all in favor. Adjournment 7:10 p.m.**

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Beverly Bernard".

Beverly Bernard, Recording Secretary