



**Canterbury Conservation Commission**  
Canterbury, NH 03224

Minutes of the Meeting

May 14, 2012

Present: Kelly Short, Jen Taylor, Galen Beale, Tom Osmer, Bob Fife, Linda Fife, Faith Berry, Steve Seron, Jim Bassett

Absent: Teresa Wyman, Fred Ficken, Ken Stern

Guests: Mark Stevens, Steve Cochran, Marcia Hamilton and Nicole Hamilton, Ty Miller, Mindy Beltramo

Kelly opened the with an appreciation of Jen's six years as Chair of the Conservation Commission. Her term encompassed the rejection of the Ash Dump on the Merrimack River and the eventual purchase of the property by the NH Fish and Game Department; the purchase of Hildreth Field; the disputed easement on Foster Road and the purchase and sale of the Gold Star Sod Farm. The Commission members expressed their appreciation of all of Jen's hard work to guide these outcomes over the years.

**1. Bob's Field - pasturing cows in the field**

Kelly reported that she had gotten several calls about the newly pastured cows on Bob's Field. Kelly called Bob Steenson who felt it was best to deal directly with Luke Mahoney on these several issues. Bob Fife said he had called Luke once and Jen said she had found Luke very responsive in her discussions with him. Responding to these various concerns, Luke has moved the fence into the field, away from the road; he has fenced off the bluebird houses and is willing to re-fence part of the wetland area to an agreed upon area.

Tyson said the Selectmen have no contract with Luke on this field; the money they would receive would not be significant and as they negotiate, perhaps it might be possible to barter. Ty said that the Town's name is now on Luke's liability policy so the Town is not liable.

Tyson said he would like the Conservation Commission to be the liaison with Brookford Farm.

Kelly said that the role of the Selectmen and the role of the Conservation Commission in this situation is not clear. Pasturing Luke Mahoney's cows in Bob's Field was not a Conservation Commission initiative, the Commission only said to the Selectmen that there are several people interested in putting animals in

Bob's Field, but that it was up to the Selectmen to negotiate with them. Kelly felt it would be best if only one person was the contact person with Luke Mahoney, Tyson volunteered to be that person.

Kelly asked for input from the visitors. Mark Stevens, representing the Agricultural Commission, said that the Agricultural Commission was not necessarily against cows in the field, but they were concerned about the process. He asked for a more transparent process, because his Commission was aware of the other people who had asked to put animals in the field who have been turned down. Mark suggested a more open process where perhaps names could be drawn, or that a policy could be written. Mark continued that the Agricultural Commission is willing to help and consider themselves a resource to the various Town Boards. In response to a question by Faith Berry, Mark said that their Commission maintains an up to date list of farmers in town, but not one specifically of people who are interested in renting farm land.

Additional issues were raised:

Is Bob's Field a Conservation Property or a Town Property?

Kelly responded that the Conservation Commission used its conservation monies to purchase the property and it was clearly stated that the purpose of the purchase of Bob's Field was for Conservation and the Commission would like to see an Easement placed on the Field. Jen added that she felt that the property has been managed by the Conservation Commission since its purchase: we have written a Management Plan, and over the years our land management efforts, such as mowing and putting in a culvert, has been guided by this document. Tom Osmer said that the Conservation Commission does not have the authority to manage this field without the blessing of the Selectmen. Kelly said this is a question to be brought to the Selectmen.

Steve Cochran expressed the view that the cows are making a mess of the field and felt there should be fewer cows in the pasture. He too was concerned about the how Luke had seemingly been given preference over the other farmers in town. He felt that this use of the field prohibits other important uses of the field as people are unwilling to go into the field because of the cows. Jen said she had talked to other people interested in using the Field, and she has given them the Management Plan and talked about how we are trying to balance our Management priorities. However, Luke's request came so fast there was no time to give him any information. She suggested we meet with Luke and give him the Management Plan.

Kelly passed out the Management Plan for Bob's Field, and reviewed the Management Goals: Scenic Vista being the first goal of the plan and Agriculture a secondary goal. She said that that Conservation Commission would like to ask the Agricultural Commission for their advice about Best Management Practices in the Field.

Bob Fife spoke about his deep disappointment in the process and how sad he was that we were knocking our heads together now.

Kelly responded saying that we are going through a learning experience, but that the field is resilient and this is a short term problem. She will meet with the Selectmen and the Conservation Commission will consult with the Agriculture Commission on Best Practices.

Tom Osmer said that while the field no doubt will recover in a year, if it is overgrazed now, the carefully selected wild apple trees may be eaten, something that will take years to recover from.

Steve Cochran said perhaps the easiest best management practice would be to have no cows. Kelly said that the Selectmen have already worked out an arrangement with Brookford Farm. Tyson replied you all need to know that the general public wants to see animals in the field, and that is has been a pasture before. It would be hard to remove the cows now, and we should offer Luke money if that were the case.

## **2. Golf Course Discretionary Conservation Easement - Kelly**

The Discretionary Conservation Easement on the Golf Course Fairways has expired and the Selectmen have asked the Conservation Commission for their input on renewing the Easement. Kelly said that this is not a permanent easement but one that will last ten years or so. Her feeling is that a golf course, while encompassing a large amount of land, is also highly maintained and not particularly good wildlife habitat. While the agreement encompassed other perks for the town, they do not add up to much. A new agreement will not accomplish much.

A discussion followed about the original agreement with was made in lieu of the payment of the Change of Use Tax when the property was taken out of Current Use. Tyson said that the owners currently pay \$500. in taxes.

Tom Osmer asked if since there is no longer an easement, will they be charged the Change of Use Tax, and if so will that go the Conservation Commission as this tax has historically. Tyson said he did not know that it might have to go to a vote of the Town.

Jen said that a golf course is a good use of this land, and that if they had to pay full taxes, perhaps it might put them out of business. She felt it would be a shame if the property were put up for sale and divided into house lots.

Galen said that she didn't think a golf course has much conservation value. What do our zoning regulations say about house lots on this property?

Tom Osmer said that if they were interested in a permanent conservation easement encompassing the whole property and perhaps in exchange for reduced fees, that might be of interest to the Commission. He suggested looking at the co-occurrence maps.

Jim [arriving at 8:00 p.m.] briefly reviewed the history of this discretionary conservation easement. He suggested there could not be many new houses built on the land with the existing roads and zoning, but anything is possible.

Faith said that this discretionary conservation easement was just a way to get a tax break. Tyson replied that it preserves open space. Faith replied, but only for 10 years.

Kelly appoints Faith Berry a voting member for the evening.

**Motion** by Tom Osmer that the Conservation Commission make a recommendation to the Selectmen that the Commission does not see a high conservation value in renewing the Discretionary Conservation Easement on the Golf Course property.

Seconded by Linda. All vote in favor of this motion.

### **3. Cow Pasturing on West Road Field**

Tyson reviewed this property, known to many on the Conservation Commission as the "Donut Hole" in the Gold Star Property. It is on the north side of the road and is under easement with the Forest society. Tyson asked the Forest Society if cow grazing would be ok on this small field. They said it was consistent with the easement and were agreeable. The Commission did not object to grazing cows on this land if it does not preclude access to the beach on the Merrimack River.

### **4. Land Donation on Sunset Mountain Road**

At last month's Conservation Commission meeting we identified this piece of land on our maps. There are a number of properties on Rocky Pond owned by the Town already. The Commission would like to walk the property and then make a decision on accepting this donation. Kelly will contact the Selectmen with our recommendation after the walk.

### **5. Bob's Field Recognition**

After reviewing a recent walk around the field and photographs, the Commission voted to place an inscribed polished granite bench at a yet to be known location in Bob's Field. This effort will be covered by private fundraising.

### **6. "Triangle" piece in Bob's Field**

This small triangular piece of land, next to the Parish House, fronting on Kimball Pond Road is owned by the Church. Members of the Conservation Commission would like to own this piece of land. Ron Turcotte is the point person for the Church in our discussion of acquiring this piece of land.

The Commission identified several reasons for an acquisition:

It forms the beginning of the snowmobile trail running through the field

It would be a nice flat place for a bench

It could be built upon, interfering with the Bob's Field vista

Commission members hoped to work out an agreeable price and perhaps only need a lot line adjustment.

#### **7. Stewardship Committee - Tom Osmer**

While the Committee has not met in full, there are several projects under way. Tom has built the "Beaver Deceiver" and he and Bob and whoever wishes to help, will put it in Kimball Pond soon. Thank You Tom!!

Currently Jen has agreed to be the point person for the Riverland Conservation Area and work on issues of the Gate opening and closing, trash and better signage. Galen and Tom will also help. Tom suggested that when we find some help to manage this property we put it in a written proposal to the Selectmen.

#### **8. Approval of the April Minutes**

On a **Motion** by Linda, seconded by Faith the April, 2012 Minutes were adopted with agreed upon changes. All voted in favor.

#### **9. Other Business**

Kelly said she had talked to the Regional Planning Commission and they sent her a newly created map and an outline for how to create a co-occurrence map which will be helpful to the group.

Kelly would like to change the night that the Conservation Commission meets. She asked for input for the commission members.

Jim talked briefly about his nomination to the Supreme Court and that he would have to step down as a member of the Commission if appointed.

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:30 by Bob and seconded by Kelly. All voted in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Galen Beale, Secretary